

VOLUME 5
NUMBER 2

FANTASTIC ADVENTURES

YESTERDAY'S CLOCK *by* David Wright
O'BRIEN

fantastic

ADVENTURES

FEBRUARY
25c



RETURN OF THE
WHISPERING GORILLA

By DAVID V. REED



CHILLED? SNEEZING?

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COLDS AND SORE THROAT**



LISTERINE- Quick!

It may nip the trouble in the bud

At the first sign of chill, or sneeze, start gargling with this wonderful antiseptic.

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"YES"
HE'S MAKING
GOOD MONEY
IN RADIO
NOW



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THANKS

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YES! I'VE GOT A GOOD JOB NOW AND A REAL FUTURE. THANKS TO N.R.I. TRAINING

TOM SAID
"NO"
HE'S STILL
WAITING
FOR "LUCK"



BILLS & SAP TO WASTE HIS TIME STUDYING RADIO AT HOME



SAME OLD GRIND-- SAME SKINNY PAY ENVELOPE-- I'M JUST WHERE I WAS FIVE YEARS AGO

EVEN IN A FAILURE, I'LL NEVER GET ANYWHERE

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Front cover painting by Robert Gibson Jones illustrating a scene from "Return of the Whispering Gorilla"

Back cover painting by Frank R. Paul, depicting the legendary flight of Icarus and Daedalus

Illustrations by Robert Gibson Jones; Rod Ruth; Robert Fuqua; Magarian; A. K. Bilder;
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FEBRUARY

1963

FANTASTIC ADVENTURES is published monthly by ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY at 240 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill. Washington Bureau, Editorial Headquarters, 240 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill. Entered as second class matter April 18, 1949, at the Post Office, Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3rd, 1879. Subscription \$2.00 a year (12 issues); Canada, \$2.00; Foreign, \$3.00. Subscribers should allow at least two weeks for change of address. All communications about subscriptions should be addressed to the Director of Circulation, 240 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

VOLUME 5
NUMBER 2



KNOWLEDGE
THAT HAS
ENDURED WITH THE
PYRAMIDS

A SECRET METHOD FOR THE MASTERY OF LIFE

WHENCE came the knowledge that built the Pyramids and the mighty Temples of the Pharaohs? Civilization began in the Nile Valley centuries ago. Where did its first builders acquire their astounding wisdom that started man on his upward climb? Beginning with naught they overcame nature's forces and gave the world its first sciences and arts. Did their knowledge come from a race now submerged beneath the sea, or were they touched with Infinite inspiration? From what concealed source came the wisdom that produced such characters as Amenhotep IV, Leonardo da Vinci, Isaac Newton, and a host of others?

Today it is known that they discovered and learned to interpret certain Secret Methods for the development of their inner power of mind. They learned to command the inner forces within their own beings, and to master life. This secret art of living has been preserved and handed down throughout the ages. Today it is extended to those who dare to use its profound principles to meet and solve the problems of life in these complex times.



AMENHOTEP IV
Founder of Egypt's
Mystery Schools

This Sealed Book—FREE

Has life brought you that personal satisfaction, the sense of achievement and happiness that you desire? If not, it is your duty to yourself to learn about this rational method of applying natural laws for the mastery of life. To the thoughtful person it is obvious that everyone cannot be entrusted with an intimate knowledge of the mysteries of life, for everyone is not capable of properly using it. But if you are one of those possessed of a true desire to forge ahead and wish to make use of the subtle influences of life, the Rosicrucians (not a religious organization) will send you *A Sealed Book of explanation without obligation*. This Sealed Book tells how you, in the privacy of your own home, without interference with your personal affairs or manner of living, may receive these secret teachings. Not weird or strange practices, but a rational application of the basic laws of life. Use the coupon, and obtain your complimentary copy.

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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

WE KNOW just how you snatched this issue up from the newsstand, and we can still hear your delighted exclamation when you saw the cover and the feature story title. Yes, it's something to be delighted about, to have the long-awaited sequel to one of the most popular stories ever to be presented in *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES* finally make its appearance. We proudly present "Return of The Whispering Gorilla" as being an even finer story than the first story of Carpenter, the man in the body of a gorilla. We all remember this character—who could forget!—and this story will bring back those memories with exciting pleasure. To say that we enjoyed reading this manuscript would be a gem of understatement. We've read it three times in the process of presenting it in its final form, as you will be reading it in a few moments. Each time we thrilled to our toes! We thank David V. Reed for a super yarn!

BUT it seems good things don't come singly. We have in this issue what we deem to be the best of the recent works of three more of our top-notch writers. First, David Wright O'Brien with "Yesterday's Clock." Here's a time story that hits a vital chord in our imaginations; in the wish all of us have often fervently and regretfully expressed. Second, Robert Moore Williams with the most powerful short we've read this year, "The Fisherman." It's about a grand old gent who takes a holiday and goes fishing . . . but we'll let you read it. Anything we could say could add nothing to a beautiful piece! And lastly, William P. McGivern, for the sweetest novella he's written to date, "The Willful Puppets."

PROPERLY, we ought to have said there were four more "star" stories in this issue, but we'll mention Robert Bloch's latest Lefty Feep story separately. Beyond all doubt, this story, "Nothing Happens to Lefty Feep," is one of the cleverest of a clever series. You'll roll in the aisles when you read it!

ONE more paragraph will cover the story front for this issue. There's John York Cabot, master of the short story, presenting another of those odd ideas of his in "The Great Train Robbery"; there's Cleo Garson with an eerie story of a macabre club of death and the strange thing

that happened to an "uninvited" member of the club; lastly P. F. Costello also descends into the nether regions with "Spawn of Hell" which relates a weird terror that descended upon the Nazis.

ROBERT GIBSON JONES is rapidly becoming one of fantasy's foremost cover and interior artists, and we feel that his work on both the cover and interior of this issue is representative of the finest work we've ever had. Certainly it is his best. We know he'll be the man you'll be asking for from now on.

HIS cover, featuring the Whispering Gorilla, strikes us as worthy of the story, and captures the eerie reality of the yarn as David V. Reed has related it. To us, the Gorilla is real. We know he's real, because we've seen him in full color on our front cover.

PERSONALLY, we feel that the famous Mac Giel has the most bewitching rival imaginable in the person of the girl in the Gorilla's arms. You'll agree with us, we know, that she's lovely. Ah, if only our cover could come to life! Even if the Gorilla would scare us half to death, we'd score happy, anyhow!

SPEAKING of illustrations, the work of Robert Gibson Jones is not the only fine work in this issue. Rod Ruth's excellent illustration for "The Fisherman" struck us as so good that we framed it and it now occupies a position of honor in our home. Robert Fuqua's interesting illustration for "Yesterday's Clock" is as fascinating as the story itself. When you've read the story, turn back to the illustration and follow it around the clock face. You'll appreciate the thought and imagination Fuqua has put into his drawing. All of us admire Magarian's work, and we think the illustration for "Nothing Happens to Lefty Feep" is a fine example of something to admire. But don't try counting the dots!

FRANK R. PAUL'S back cover should merit your praise too. A very excellent conception of one of the oldest and best known legends.

SPEAKING of covers, we hope you've already secured your copy of the February issue of

our sister magazine, AMAZING STORIES. J. Allen St. John presents a cover featuring John Carter of Mars which is one of the finest action and artistic paintings we have ever seen on a pulp magazine. The fact that it illustrates another of Edgar Rice Burroughs' famed John Carter stories (a brand new one!) has nothing to do with it.

IT ISN'T often that we resent and it isn't often that we take exception. But we are doing both right now. We have at hand a copy of a fan magazine called "Fantasy Fiction Field" in which Richard Crain writes an article called "Writing Science Fiction." To quote Mr. Crain:

"All too many people send . . . stories of character and fine writing to FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. Place your manuscript where it belongs. It may be a fine story, and the editor may appreciate it, but if it doesn't fit his mag, he can't use it."

RIGHT there is where we "resent." First, in our opinion (bolstered by many hundreds of letters received from readers) FANTASTIC ADVENTURES carries today a greater percentage of "character" stories and "fine" writing than any other pulp published in America, or anywhere else. We could mention dozens of short stories by such writers as Cabot, McGilvern, O'Brien, Williams, etc. which have been acclaimed by both our readers and the professed readers of "fine literature" who have been persuaded by us to read the stories in question and have told us repeatedly that they did not realize material of such high quality appeared in the pulps. But we need only point to two stories in this issue to bear out our point. We mean "Yesterday's Clock" and "The Fisherman." O'Brien, author of the first, had one of his stories of a very similar nature selected and published in Phil Stong's famous anthology of the best fantasy stories of the past decade.

WE, AS the editors of this magazine, must resent, both on our own behalf, and on behalf of our readers, the inference that "fine" writing is something that is not to be found in the pages of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and that writers are advised not to try to sell it to us. In our turn, we say to those writers, when you write something fine, send it to us! You'll sell it here! The main trouble with authorities on these subjects is that they don't know "fine" writing when they see it. We ask that Mr. Crain give us a list of the "fine" fiction he refers to. We would like to read it, and we'd like to get a complete opinion from not only our own readers, but from leading literary authorities of this country, even if they have never before read a pulp story. Then we will submit to these same authorities, our own selection of stories published in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. And let the chips fall where they may!

ANOTHER quote from Mr. Crain's article:
". . . you can't always blame the editor;

you can't make a living on good writing and no profits. At times it is the fault of the editor, though. One case of this was the "good and adult" story written for RAP which was rejected because it was believed that it was neither."

INCREDIBLE, Mr. Crain! How can you make a living on bad writing? How can you make a profit on bad writing? As for the "good and adult" story, you are mentioning a specific instance. Is this story still unsold? We would be very anxious to read it again. Maybe we did make a mistake. And we'd like to confirm our opinion, if we did not, by getting representative opinions from people who are in a position to be critics of "good and adult" stories.

WHAT do you mean by an "adult" story? What about "The Fisherman" in this issue? Is this "adult" or is it "kid stuff"? What about "Yesterday's Clock"? And "The Whispering Gorilla"? Or mentioning some of the stories we said we weren't going to mention a few paragraphs back, what about "The Man The World Forgot"; "Mr. Hibbard's Hat"; "The Return Of Joan Of Arc"; "Doorway To Hell"; "The Man With Five Lives"? We could go on indefinitely.

TO THE best of our knowledge, Mr. Crain has not written anything himself, except this article of advice to writers. Naturally, every man has his right to his opinion, and the right to express it. We express ours now: to you writers and would-be writers, go to the man who knows for your advice on how to write. Go to the editor for whom you intend to write. There's just the chance that he knows what he wants to buy—because he knows what his readers like to read. And everyone likes a good story! That's what we try to give you in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. And without modesty, we think we are doing it!

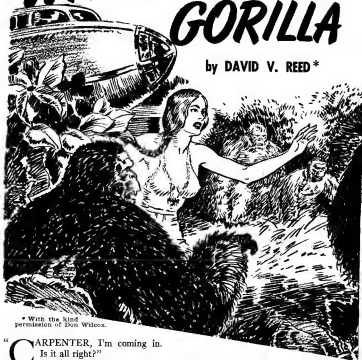
HERE'S something to remember next year, if you intend to plant sweet corn in your Victory Garden. The U. S. Department of Agriculture advises, if you want to keep those pesky earworms out of the patch of sweetcorn, carry on chemical warfare against them with mineral oil. The time for attack is when the ears are shaping up and the silk, having done its duty in pollination, is just beginning to wilt.

Plain mineral oil squirted into the silk at the ear-tip will get rid of earworms if they are still very small. If they have had time to get their growth started, the oil should be fortified with dichloroethyl ether, a chemical readily obtainable on the open market. A quarter of a teaspoonful to an ear is sufficient. It can be applied with an ordinary oilcan, for small gardens; force applicators with larger reservoirs are available for commercial growers.

(Concluded on page 155)

RETURN OF THE WHISPERING GORILLA

by DAVID V. REED*



* With the kind permission of Don Wilcox.

"CARPENTER, I'm coming in. Is it all right?"

He had heard the knocking on the heavy oak door but he made no response. Again Dr. Devoll called to him. Carpenter had been standing at the barred slit in the wall that was his window, and now, afraid that the Doc-

tor would look in, Carpenter moved away from it, flattening himself against the wall.

"Carpenter! Speak to me!"

He would come in anyway, Carpenter thought. He would come and after that

**The fate of all Africa was
in the hairy paw of a huge
gorilla, a gorilla who was
not a gorilla, but a man!**

Abbott slashed at the
gorilla with his gun



there would be no peace, and he would bring back the pain and the memories. . . .

"Go away," Carpenter said, wearily, and the sound of his own voice, as always, frightened him. "Leave me

alone. I'm all right." He had had difficulty forming the words, he thought. Soon, if all went well, he would be unable to speak. In a few hours he would drift away to that quiet world where there was no thought and no pain.

The Doctor had gone away and now Carpenter stood at the window again,

looking across the bright sunlit plains that stretched far away to a horizon marked by towering trees. That was the jungle, the dark, uneasy, savage jungle, but here life seemed quiet. He heard the sound of cattle as halfbreed Arab boys drove them home, and he heard the subdued stridency of insects. . . .

"No," he said aloud, but it was no use. He was thinking again, and the ache that was constantly with him was there again. He remembered another life, a life that once was his, but it was a fleeting thing. A face rose up from the mist of his memory, a woman's face, but the image was blurred. Everything was blurred now but he couldn't stop the thinking, the trying to remember.

A breath of wind blew through the window, bringing the smell of the jungle and his nostrils quivered and he straightened involuntarily. And now stronger thoughts came to him, and memories that crowded out the others, and he thought of the great trees and the vines, and the birds of brilliant color, and of life that was green and fresh and a world that was still and quiet.

And now, though he tried to think of the face and the other life, it would not return, but he could not forget it. "One or the other," he said aloud, listening to the sound of his voice, and he trembled.

He went away from the window and sat down on the bed, staring into the darkness of his little room. He was a captive here, but freedom was his for the taking. Why did he sit here, letting the wind bring him the smells of the life he knew and wanted? The life he knew and wanted. . . . Which was it? Which life?

"One or the other."

His voice was half a sob, half a cry of rage. He could take the bars in his hands and tear them away. He beld his hands out before him and couldn't look

at them. He sprang up, feeling the enormous strength of his body, the might and the terrible power that was his and with a single leap he was at the window, his hands curling around the bars. In a moment it would be over, the decision made. But was the decision his to make? Did he dare trust his own thoughts by now?

"Tonight," he said aloud, to himself. "Tonight, quietly again, without Devoli knowing. I'll go again tonight."

As he turned away from the window, something glittered on the floor. A shaft of sunlight had slanted through and caught the bit of mirror lying there. The bit of mirror he had stolen so long ago. He had hidden it; how had it gotten to the floor?

He stared at it fearfully, but already its fascination had won the struggle. Slowly he bent down and picked up the mirror. He held it up before him so that the light poured on it and on his face.

The face that looked at Steven Carpenter from the mirror was the face of a gorilla. Its eyes were small and dark and bloodshot, its mouth like a red scar, its teeth huge and powerful. The mirror fell from view and the gorilla disappeared as Carpenter hid the mirror under his bedclothes, but when he looked down at his body, he saw the great, naked expanse of his chest and his massive, hairy arms and his squat, strong legs.

"One or the other," the gorilla sobbed.

CHAPTER II

DR. DEVOLI paused before he began unlocking the door. For a moment he considered looking in through the window to see what Carpenter was doing. He decided against it; it made Carpenter nervous. Not that

he had ever said so—he said little these days, but the Doctor had once or twice caught him ducking into corners when he spied a face at the window. The Doctor wondered whether, in spite of his strict orders against it, any of the houseboys or the other help around the place ever looked in at Carpenter. Did they suspect that this gorilla was in reality. . . .

It struck him now, as it sometimes did, that he always thought of the—the *thing* inside this hut (for actually it was neither man nor beast) as Steven Carpenter.

He unlocked the door, listening for sounds from within, holding ready the strange rifle-like tube in his left hand. Because of the way Carpenter had sounded when he had knocked before, the Doctor had decided to administer the injection at long range. Already it was two days overdue, but the danger involved hardly occurred to Devoli; he had lived with it long enough. He knew too well the price of error in his calculations—the possibility that he might one day enter this hut and be confronted not by Carpenter, but by the gorilla in whose body Steven Carpenter had lived for two years.

Swiftly he opened the door, let himself in, closed it behind him. He saw the gorilla sitting on its bed. As he swung the tube up, the gorilla started to spring forward.

"Not! Devoli, for the love of God—don't!"

The tube spat out a green phosphorescence, a stream of innumerable tiny objects like bullets. The stream plunged into the gorilla's chest. For an instant it was as if green lightning had danced on that huge, agonized body. The gorilla stopped, clutched at its chest, then fell heavily to one knee. It looked oddly man-like in that position. Only a single groan had escaped its tightly

drawn lips.

The Doctor stood at the door, waiting. He glanced at the sweep-second hand on his watch. The gorilla dragged itself to its bed. It had too little strength to lift itself and it remained there, its great head lying on a pillow, its eyes closed. Devoli waited, his face drawn with compassion. He brushed a hand across his eyes. It was bad for Carpenter to see him reacting that way; the thought of pity had a profound, horrible effect on him. . . .

When the gorilla opened its eyes again, they were clear. It raised its head and looked at Devoli. "I'm all right now," it said, and its voice was like an incredibly deep whisper, a tired, low voice.

Devoli said, quietly, "It took almost five minutes today."

"You were late again," the gorilla whispered. "You remember what I told you . . . someday you'll be a little too late . . . I'll be waiting for you behind the door. . . ."

A slight, involuntary shudder ran through Devoli. He had seldom seen him like this. He was really bad today. How much dared he tell him now? His eyes wandered about the room, as if from among the familiar objects, from the gloomy corners, he might find an answer.

"Listen to me, Carpenter, listen carefully. I won't be able to give you these injections as often as you need them. The drugs are becoming scarce. The war has made shipment very uncertain. I'm trying to develop a substitute, but there may be times when I won't be able to give you anything for weeks. Do you think you can find the strength to hold on?"

THE gorilla had listened carefully, and as Devoli finished, it stared at him. "The strength to hold on?" it

cried in a horrible, guttural sound. "Do you think there's any strength left in me?"

"You're a man, Carpenter. You must be strong."

"A man . . ." The gorilla rose up and went to the barred window, its gait a halting, dragging thing. "For two years you've called me a man. Sometimes, when the drugs are still functioning in me, I almost believe you. I forget the bars in my little house . . . I almost forget the body whose prisoner I am. . . . But do you think I don't know what's been happening to me, Devoli?"

"There's nothing happening that can't be cured in time."

"You don't believe that yourself," the gorilla whispered. "You don't know what it is." It held its head in its two huge hands. "The brain in here is Steven Carpenter's now, but when the drugs are eaten by this body, even the brain begins turning. Do you think I don't know what's happening?" It cried brokenly. "Do you think I don't know that this monstrous, beast's body is devouring my brain—that little by little the blood that runs through these veins erodes the mind that lives on the blood of this animal? I do know, Devoli, and I've known for a long time—without your drugs even the awareness of my identity ceases! Without your drugs I am no longer even this ghastly parody of a man but a gorilla, a beast of the jungles!"

"You mustn't let yourself think along such—"

"No?" the gorilla snarled. "But perhaps my thoughts aren't my own any more! Perhaps these millions of little cells of my body do my thinking. But the prospect doesn't frighten me, Devoli," it said, its voice softer now and a throaty rumble. "Not any more. It won't be worse than living here this

way. You'll either have to let me free . . . or kill me . . . as you should never have let me live. . . ."

And now, Devoli thought, seeing Carpenter break down again and seeing the tears run down that distorted, black face, it would be all right for awhile. As long as Carpenter had the capacity for self pity, he was safe. As long as the sight of himself in the fragment of mirror he kept carefully hidden from Devoli, but which Devoli knew—as long as that sight filled him with loathing, just so long was Steven Carpenter removed from the fate he had recognized.

"I'll see you tonight," said Devoli, going to the door. "Tambo went into Tiola for the mail and I'm expecting some magazines. Maybe we'll get new chapters of that serial you're reading."

As he went back to the main house, the Doctor remembered the words Carpenter had used . . . *you should never have let me live*. How many times had Devoli himself asked that question? His mind returned again to that night two years before. . . .

All he had known then was that Steven Carpenter was an American newspaperman, writing articles for a New York newspaper. Devoli hadn't known that Carpenter had been ordered into hiding by his paper because there had been attempts on his life, that he was writing a series exposing a powerful criminal syndicate. He had known Carpenter only a few weeks then, and he had come to respect and admire this intelligent young man who lived nearby. Carpenter had even become interested in the Doctor's experiments with gorillas, in those long ago days when Devoli believed that the intelligence of a gorilla might be enormously advanced if only it could be taught to speak.

AND then one night the Doctor's servants had carried Steven Car-

penter into the Doctor's house. He was dying. An assassin had followed him thousands of miles to Sao Paulo to empty a gun into him. How well Devoli recalled every detail of that memorable night. No one but a scientist, immersed in his work, perhaps blind to every consequence but the success of an experiment, would have dared what he did.

What had impelled him? He had not even believed he had one chance in a thousand, but he had looked at the corpse and he had felt . . . he could almost remember the words: "*. . . two hours ago you were alive. Here lies youth and vigor, dead, while an old man who scarcely knew him or his name is the only one to mourn. An old man who has spent his years trying to approach making out of animals what nature gave you at birth. How wasteful . . . how tragic. . . . What good did all the fighting do you? Your brain was no stronger than your heart. When they stopped that, they stopped everything. . . .*"

And then he had thought of it. He had shouted it aloud. "*Your brain, Carpenter! You were no more than your brain!*"

That had been the beginning. With his magnificent skill as a surgeon, Devoli had performed a miracle, though it was weeks before he knew. And after that. . . .

Devoli shook his head and muttered to himself. So much had happened since then. He thought back to the wife Steven Carpenter had had, the work he had left unfinished, but to which he returned. And the aftermath. But that was before either of them had had any inkling of what was to follow. He could have left Carpenter a half-crazed beast long before. What had stopped him?

What was there for Carpenter to live for? But the Doctor shrank from the

question. Once he had given life to Steven Carpenter—to the brain that was the man. What had given him the right to so awful a decision? And what perverted sense of power made him assume he now had any right to decide on Carpenter's death? Just because he told himself that this was slowly becoming a *thing* that was not Carpenter? Was it for him to say?

But the end was approaching swiftly. Devoli had told only part of the truth. The drugs were no longer uncertain—they were impossible to get! A substitute? Perhaps. It might take years to find it.

Meanwhile there were enough of the drugs left for five or six more injections. Already it was a matter of perhaps two or three weeks. After that there would be nothing left to combat, however feeble, the virus that was destroying Steven Carpenter. The brain the Doctor had put into a gorilla's body was being claimed by that body. The monster lay in wait, sucking, eating, devouring. . . .

Now Devoli stood on the verandah of his house, looking out over the peaceful fields. The weight of his age lay heavy upon him, but the weight of his responsibilities was overpowering.

2

BY now there was a considerable number of men around the great table. The face of the table was highly polished, and where it was not covered with papers and maps and charts, some of which had fallen to the floor, it reflected the decorations on the uniforms of many of these men. Tobacco smoke lay like a weightless veil in midair, and the Colonel waved a hand to clear the air around him. From where he sat at the head of the table, his eyes traveled down the row of intent faces on his left, until

they rested on a man who sat apart from the others.

The Colonel said: "Then your research is finished, Major?"

Without answering the question directly, the Major said: "In 1940, this wonderful animal that became known as the Whispering Gorilla first appeared in New York. It came originally from Africa, presumably from the Gold Coast, where Dr. Dartworth Devoli was then living. As far as we know, the gorilla ran away from Devoli. Somewhere it had gotten enough money to buy passage to New York on the *S. S. Majestic*. The story begins there."

"This man Devoli?" the Colonel inquired.

"An Englishman," the Major nodded. "Perhaps not too aware of the war, but thoroughly loyal. At any rate," he resumed, "the gorilla sailed alone, locked in its stateroom, its true identity hidden by the amazing boldness of its action. Presumably it was an actor who had undertaken a wild, provoking role as a publicity trick. This theory was aided by the interest of a man named Roland Fuzziman, a theatrical producer, who was aboard with his troupe of actors, returning from a tour of South Africa.

"We do not know what Fuzziman really thought. In spite of many evidences which he alone could gather, Fuzziman seems to have avoided concluding that the gorilla was, in reality, a true gorilla—possibly to preserve his own peace of mind. He was able to persuade it to join with him, and together they made a fortune in New York in a play written around the gorilla.

"For some reason still not clear to us, the gorilla later took to broadcasting as W.G., which stood for Whispering Gorilla. Possibly the idea was Fuzziman's, or someone who paid Fuzziman, but what happened was that the

gorilla became a radio crusader, investigating crime and corruption, and attacking especially a certain Paul Swangler, the head of a large criminal syndicate. . . ."

The Major paused to light a cigarette, enjoying the effect of his words, and he smiled, saying, "Fantastic, is it not? To think that for months this jungle beast, trained by an obscure experimenter to speak like a man, could live among humans with none suspecting the truth. Its steadfastness in clinging to what was thought to be an excellently contrived costume only aided the deception. Actually, gentlemen—would any of you remotely imagine such a thing?

"It was Swangler who first thought of it. Enough, at any rate, to attempt proving it. The gorilla had brought one of Swangler's hirelings to trial. Here Swangler played a trump: he subpoenaed the gorilla as a witness for the defense! When the gorilla came to court—it must have been an amazing spectacle—it naturally could not obey the judge's order to remove its disguise."

THE Major paused again, savoring the dramatic triumph of the story. When he judged the pause to have been just long enough, he said, "The trial, however, failed, and the criminal went free. The gorilla, held for contempt of court, was freed on bail. And here Paul Swangler played a master card. He arranged a scene which so infuriated the poor beast that it went berserk in full sight of thousands of people! Only then, after police had captured and subdued the gorilla, did the astonishing truth become known. . . ."

"Come," said the Colonel, irritably, "what happened? End it."

The Major shrugged and held up a mass of newspaper clippings. "The gorilla had been beaten within an inch

of its life. Dr. Devoli, who had followed the animal shortly after its escape, was able to save it, but he saved only the wreck of that magnificent beast. The animal's brain had been irreparably ruined. It became an animal again, sickly, dull-witted. It returned—"he held up a large picture of a gorilla in a strong wooden cage—"in this cage to Africa, with Dr. Devoli."

"And Dr. Devoli? . . ."

"Has, as we know," supplied the Major, "never stopped his work with these beasts. Our agents have given us ample evidence of this. The jungle surrounding Devoli's home is filled with gorillas, surely a strange animal to be found in any numbers in French West Africa. We have heard incredible stories of what these gorillas do in the jungle. The Doctor's laboratories have always held at least one specimen. And there, gentlemen, is where we must seek the assistance of Dr. Devoli. For the intelligence which he seems able to breed in these beasts is a weapon we must have."

The Colonel asked: "Your plans are concluded?"

"Yes. Our agents and partisans are stationed."

"Your credentials are ready?"

The Major nodded.

"What route will you take?"

The Major looked at a map before him. "The area," he said, "is untrustworthy. One cannot be certain of the strength of the Vichy French there, or of the numbers of the Free French. Therefore—" and he traced a line from Libya down into French West Africa—"once we are in Kutiala, we go to Kuora, along the Banifing river to the Bagoe, and at the triple junction of the Bagoe with the Baniegue and Bafing rivers, we go to Tiola. From there it is a short way."

"Yes," the Colonel agreed. He

added, as an afterthought, "See that our people in Dakar are wide awake until then."

BECAUSE the moon had started rising, every shadow became treacherous. The tall man who stood alone against the flat brick building listened, then answered the low whistle. The tropical moon hung fat and golden, and the air was moist with the salty breath of Gorce Gulf. Across the clear area of the railroad yard, a long line of boxcars moved slowly into sight, crawling behind two donkey engines that sent up huge yellow smoke plumes. They were coming into Dakar, and they could have come from only one place—from St. Louis, 160 miles north, in the Senegal country.

A second man suddenly appeared. He had slid around the exposed corner of the building and come up beside the first man. Within a few seconds, a third man duplicated this appearance. He said, without looking at the other two, "It's coming in now."

"From St. Louis, Hans?"

"Yes. Over a hundred cars, and more coming."

They waited until the cars were closer, but at the last moment the engines swung away, traveling over a series of switches. When the engines stopped, fifty yards of open, moonlit track lay between the men and the cars.

"Hans, why are they stopping there?"

"I don't know. Perhaps they've changed plans."

"They seem to be very careful. What do you think?"

The tall man said: "We'll take the chance. Ready?"

Together, the three men leaped from the shadow and began running across the tracks. Halfway across the open space, the tall man stumbled and went

down. He fell with his head on the corner of a tie and the blow stunned him momentarily. Unsteadily, he rose in time to see his companions reaching the cars. Then, though he didn't understand it at the moment, he saw the boxcar doors slide open, and saw the little orange flames spurting from inside the cars, keeping quick time with the flat crack of guns. Simultaneously, a huge searchlight swung its white beam on the scene.

One of the two men had been shot down almost at once. The other had ducked under the wheels of the boxcar. Half a dozen shots snarled together, at least one of them from the man under the car. He came out from the other side. The searchlight lanced across, picking him up as he tried to duck into shadows again.

That was when the man who had fallen found his revolver. He raised the barrel and took deliberate aim. Once . . . twice . . . five times his gun spoke, and after the fifth shot the searchlight was dark, and the hunters had only the moon to guide them.

He began running back, heard the guns spit behind him, heard the chase divide to include him, saw the gravel before him leaping. He reached the brick house and crouched there while he reloaded. By then he had decided he couldn't get out of the yards alive, but he had six bullets in his revolver, and he meant to use them well.

THE Prefect of the *Gendarmerie Centrale* at Dakar was burning with a quiet, bitter fury. He listened to the District Captain end his recital, then he said: "The final result of this affair, then, is that only one of the three men was killed?"

"The other two were most certainly wounded," said the Captain, energetically. "The one who ran under the

cars left a trail of blood. The other, the destroyer of the searchlight, was hit twice. Yes, he was *seen* to have been hit twice."

"And twice wounded he was still able to shoot down four of his pursuers—finally to escape?"

The Captain murmured: "A most remarkable shot, was he not?"

"And the explanation of this bloody affair?"

"The military authorities gave none. As usual."

The Prefect hammered a fist down on his desk, but his voice, when he spoke, was restrained and thoughtful. "I am not a political man," he said. "I leave politics to the army. But these Germans cannot so overrun our city. Dakar is not a *Boche* shooting gallery. Armistice or not, they must be taught where authority in this city resides; they must be taught that we French can still administer justice. This is a lesson I propose to teach them."

He met the Captain's eye and added, "Let us speak again with Dr. Bonat. Perhaps we know a few things the Germans do not suspect, eh? . . ."

It was perhaps an hour later that a young woman came into the Prefect's office. She was tall and slender, and her eyes were a clear blue, a blue that seemed to enhance the perfection of her long blonde hair, though this was but one feature of her loveliness. She sat down alone with the Prefect.

"Jeanne," said the Prefect, "we are hunting the two survivors of that business in the railroad yard tonight. A doctor told us that he treated a man for gunshot wounds a few hours ago. Two wounds, the thigh and upper chest. A foreigner, said the Doctor, thought he could not guess at the man's nationality. Still, he spoke once or twice in delirium, and he mentioned a place. I am sending you there to look for such

a man. I am sending you because a strange man might be watched in the interior these days. We no longer know whom to trust."

"And if I find him?" asked the girl.

"Telegraph immediately from Goundam."

"Where is the place I am to go?"

"Tiola," said the Prefect. "Near the triple junction of the Bagoe, Banlegue and Bafing rivers."

NIGHT was slowly enveloping the jungle. Far to the east, the peak of Mount Mina was still touched with sunlight, and the plateau seemed dark indeed in the electric blue of twilight. One of Dr. Devoli's houseboys pattered across the floor to light an oil lamp that hung from the high bamboo ceiling.

"Your interest both flatters and confuses me, Major Brooks," said Devoli. "However, my work, as you call it, ended two years ago."

The Major allowed a smile to flit across his granitic features. "Much as I admire your reticence, my dear Doctor," he said, "I know otherwise. That knowledge comes from an excellent source."

Dr. Devoli said nothing, waiting.

"From Military Intelligence," said the Major quietly, nodding. "From headquarters of the British Expeditionary Force in Cairo." He took a large, bulky envelope from his breast pocket. Moving aside the drinks that stood on the rattan table, the Major laid down several passports, a newspaper clipping from the *London Daily Sketch*, containing his picture in an army Major's uniform (though he now wore clean white linens), two letters signed by Ministry officials in London, a letter of introduction from General Sir Hugh Gaystone in Cairo.

Dr. Devoli handed back the papers.

"Naturally, Major, I am at your service, though I cannot understand—"

"All in good time, Doctor. Forgive me if I seem to lean toward mystery." He smiled. "You might call it an occupational disease in my work. But to clarify matters—you are still experimenting?"

"It seems past denying, Major, does it not?"

"Then perhaps I might have a look at your . . . ah . . . subjects?"

Devoli looked out across the settling gloom that hemmed in the open verandah. "It's rather late," he said, but he led the way down the stairs, pausing at the door long enough to light a lantern.

A pathway, worn through thick grass, led to a group of other buildings nearby. One of the barns was lighted, and a tall, half-naked Senegalese was squatting on the floor, mending harness. An Arab boy came out of a bench-house, carrying water. Twenty feet farther on was a small building, a hut, separated from the group. It was low and windowless, save for one barred aperture in its walls.

The Doctor stopped before a door with a double padlock. He knocked softly on the door and waited. Presently a voice, either abnormally deep or somehow muffled, said the single word: "Doctor."

A scarcely audible sigh escaped Devoli. He leaned against the door and said, "I'm coming in."

A full minute went by before the voice answered. "All right."

Devoli said: "There's a man with me."

"All right."

Devoli thought: he doesn't know what I'm saying . . . he must be far gone tonight, and he said, "Stay close to me, Major," and slowly, very slowly, he opened the heavy door. Then he

thrust the lantern so that its light shone behind the door and he nodded to the Major.

AS the two men entered, the outer perimeter of light moved across the floor, past a heavy table on which were piled newspapers and magazines and phonograph records. The light moved past a chair, on which stood a phonograph, past a bed, carefully made and covered with fresh linen. There was a shoe under the bed, a large, square shoe, and not far away was the shoe's mate, but this second shoe had been torn apart, mangled and ripped to shreds. Now the light searched a corner . . . and caught the green and orange slits of glazed, reflected light from two eyes that could see in that darkness. The light moved up—swung crazily a moment, then righted itself as Dr. Devoli freed his arm from the Major's sudden grip. The lantern shone full in the corner now.

Sitting on its haunches, its back against the juncture of the two walls, sat a huge gorilla. Its leathery features glistened and its powerful, hairy arms rested on folded knees, and though it was otherwise entirely unclothed, one of its feet was encased in a white cotton sock.

Dr. Devoli said: "Why are you sitting there?"

The greatest beast moved its arms slightly and kept looking at the Major. Presently its mouth opened, showing pink gums and wicked teeth, and moving its lips silently for a moment before it spoke, the gorilla said: "You know I like to sit here."

"But I gave you one of my best chairs."

After a long pause, the gorilla said: "He is afraid of me."

"The Major is a friend. He has no reason to fear you."

The gorilla shook its huge head and said, in a throbbing whisper, "You looked behind the door . . . when you came in . . . so you must fear me . . . all of you. . . ."

The Doctor turned away from the gorilla's inscrutable gaze and led the Major out. Preoccupied with his own thoughts, Devoli walked in silence toward the house, when he noticed Ali, the eldest houseboy, had come out on the verandah with a lantern. Now, suddenly, the wind changed and brought the sound of approaching horses.

The Major's brow was covered with a thin film of sweat, and noticing how shaken he appeared, Devoli had waited for the Major to regain his poise before he spoke. But now Brooks said, in a voice that fought to remain even, "Are you expecting anyone?"

"A friend of mine, an American."

"Visiting?"

Devoli nodded. "How'd you know?"

"Intelligence didn't mention him."

"Naturally. He's only been here a week or so."

THEY were on the verandah steps now, waiting with Ali. In a moment a wagon and team of horses came riding into the light. A tall young man climbed off the wagon, calling, "Got a dozen cans of tuna fish, Doctor!" He limped slightly as he came up on the verandah, carrying a small sack, one of many piled in the wagon. He was silent now that he had seen the Major. He wore denim trousers and an open shirt, and hanging from a loose cartridge belt at his hips was an open-holstered revolver. His sandy hair was close cropped and his skin deep copper.

"Major Brooks, Joe Abbott," said Devoli. "Let's go in and have a drink. Ali, hurry and get some of that battery ice, quick."

"I'm afraid I haven't time, Doctor. My friends are expecting me back."

"But I assumed you would be my guest, tonight at least. Surely you don't intend traveling back to Tiola alone? The nights here aren't as quiet as they appear."

"I'm sure of that," Major Brooks laughed. "No, Doctor, I'm not traveling alone, and I'm not going to Tiola. I've several friends waiting for me a short way down the road and we've our own plans, but—"

"Are you sure?" Abbott interrupted. "I mean, I just came down the road and I didn't see anyone."

"They saw you," the Major smiled. "You may be sure of that."

"This isn't particularly healthy country for an Englishman," said Devoli, winking at Brooks. "The Vichy French might not believe he came here merely because he was interested in my experiments."

Abbott spoke before he caught the Doctor's slight signal. It was too late to stop then. He asked, "Your experiments?"

"With the gorilla," Devoli nodded.

"There are more than one, aren't there, Doctor?" said Brooks.

"Why, yes," said Devoli. "I was referring to the species." He called toward the kitchen. "Benno! Saddle our guest's horse!"

Abbott had seated himself on the verandah rail, and as Ali came out with the drinks, he took one and lighted a cigarette.

"May I have one, Mr. Abbott?" Crossing over, the Major held his hand out for the package. He took a cigarette and observed, "I see you haven't been away from home very long."

Abbott said, carelessly, "You can get American cigarettes in Cairo, Major. And I answer direct questions very nicely," he grinned. "Just in case you

want to ask any."

"Not at all. I just can't help feeling a bit curious about an American in French West Africa, these days, especially."

Abbott took a light from Brooks. "It's no secret. I work for the New York *Telegram*. I've been reporting the African front."

"British or American?"

Abbott shrugged. "Can't tell 'em apart, can you? We've had our tanks and planes there since Rommel's last push. Maybe more are coming; it figures. Anyway, I ducked in here between assignments and I'm due out soon. You might call this a quick vacation."

"You know," Major Brooks smiled, "I once met an American in the Victoria desert in Australia—the only other white man, except for my party, for hundreds of miles. I'm becoming accustomed to meeting you Americans everywhere. We've the war to thank, I suppose." He smiled, drained his glass, and said to Devoli, "I hope to be back soon, Doctor. Perhaps tomorrow. See you again, I hope, Mr. Abbott. Goodnight."

Joe Abbott waited until the Major's horse had disappeared into the darkness before he said: "Sorry I almost missed your signal."

Dr. Devoli smiled, looking at Abbott. "Surely," he said, "you didn't miss the signal I directed at Major Brooks?"

"No," said Abbott. "I didn't miss it."

"Then what do you think?"

"Suppose you tell me, Doctor."

"All right," said Devoli, very quietly. "It's simply this: My house, my servants and I have been under surveillance for some time."

"By whom?"

"By people connected with Major

Randolph Brooks."

Abbott said: "Just who is this Major Brooks?"

"He's from British Intelligence," said Devoli. "At least he says so. My guess is that our friend the Major is a Nazi spy."

Joe Abbott let his breath out softly and crushed his cigarette.

CHAPTER III

"HE HAD a lot of identification with him," said Devoli, looking out across the dark plain. "He even had a letter from a friend of mine who I know is in a hospital in Coventry. But he also had a newspaper clipping from the London *Sketch* with his own picture in it. The top of that page was dated this past February, and it was page 32. Do you see what I am saying, Joe?"

"Frankly, no."

"It's a small matter, a detail," said the Doctor. "The Germans are usually good at details, but no London newspaper, no newspaper in Britain, for that matter, has published a 32-page edition since shortly after the war began. They haven't enough paper." He regarded Abbott wanly and said: "Why do you think they're here, Joe?"

Abbott hesitated. "What about your experiments?"

Dr. Devoli sat down. "There are no experiments. The things the Major spoke of have been dead for two years. He used it as an entrance here. He's looking for something, Joe."

"If you mean me, you're wrong."

There was a silent interval before Devoli spoke. "Joe, I've asked no questions and I'm asking none now—but for your own sake you must realize these men are hunting you. There's nothing else for them here. And now that they've found you—"

"You're wrong, Doctor," said Ab-

bott, tight-lipped. He fumbled with his cigarettes again, finally lighting one. "I'll tell you the way it was. You've been more decent than I could have hoped. All you know about me is that I crawled in here two weeks ago with two bullet holes in me, saying that Alan Bradford had sent me. . . ." He paused, drawing on his cigarette thoughtfully. "The *Telegram* had sent Alan to Cairo to cover the African front. I'd known him in New York. I had a plane and sometimes I flew his paper's men on stories. I met him through one of the finest newspapermen that ever lived—fellow called Carpenter. . . ."

It was the strange way that Devoli had suddenly reacted that made Abbott pause. "What's the matter, Doctor?" he asked.

"Nothing. Nothing at all. Please continue."

There was an elusive little thought chasing around in the back of Abbott's mind; it had been there before. He said, "I'd been ferrying bombers for the British for a year. When we got in, I applied for our own service, and they got me to ferry ships for the Chinese. I kept applying for combat service and my orders finally caught up with me in India. I got to South Africa and came up to Dakar, hoping I'd cross to Rio. Then I met Alan at the American consulate in Dakar.

"He told me he'd run across something hot—Nazi work in Dakar, but he needed help and there was no one he could trust."

Abbott blew out smoke, grinning. "Just my dish. I dug up an Austrian refugee I knew, an underground worker named Hans Kronenfeld, and we worked together. Alan knew the Spanish were loading barges of sealed trains from Morocco to St. Louis, and from St. Louis they came to Dakar by rail. One night we got into

the railroad yards, but something went wrong. One of us—Hans or Alan, I don't know which—was shot down, killed. . . ." Abbott drew a long breath before he went on. "But maybe the other got away. The last I saw, he was ducking under cars. Alan had told us to meet here if we became separated. He said you were an old friend, that you'd shelter us until we got together again. . . ."

"And now?"

"I'm waiting. If you let me, I'll wait here another week. One of them may be alive, you see, and he'll come." The Doctor stood against the rail, saying nothing. Abbott asked: "Do you believe me?"

"Is it important?"

"No," said Abbott. "If you don't believe me, I'll go to Tiola. I'll manage to hang on there. But somehow, I'd like you to believe me."

"Tell me," said Devoli, "in the shooting—what happened?"

"I'm a good shot, Doctor," Abbott said, briefly.

"Then you could be prosecuted for murder. France isn't at war, you understand. Why are you so certain the Major isn't hunting you?"

JOE ABBOTT shook his head. A soft, bitter smile lit his face. "They wouldn't know where to come for me. Only two men knew—and one of them is dead. If they caught the other, I'm waiting for nothing." He shrugged. "But neither of them would talk."

The Doctor brushed a hand across his face. He said: "I believe you, Joe. That's why I'm so confused. Because it doesn't make sense, don't you see? I believe you and I've trusted you from the start—but if these men aren't after you, what are they doing here?"

"I don't know. Didn't you get any idea?"

Devoli sighed. "He spoke only of my experiments, and because I knew almost from the start that he was an imposter, I let him go on, hoping he might say something in an unguarded moment. But he didn't, and when you came and I saw how interested he was in you—in that pack of cigarettes, I decided he had been wasting time, waiting for you. . . ."

Abbott said: "Alan gave me the cigarettes." Almost absently, he mused, "Certainly a Nazi would be interested in finding an American here, especially if he wanted something here. He would hardly need his elaborate credentials if he was only after me. . . ." He looked up at the Doctor curiously. "I knew there was something I meant to ask. What was that conversation you and he had about gorillas?"

Devoli motioned toward the flat-topped building in the darkness. "I'd shown him a tame gorilla I keep there."

"A what?"

"A gorilla. Entirely harmless. I've never mentioned it to you because it isn't important."

"But the Major knew about it?"

"Yes," the Doctor sighed. "There's a long story connected with that gorilla. Anybody might know about it. The Major asked to see it, probably to waste time until you. . . but we've eliminated that. . . ."

"We have indeed!" Abbott snapped. "And maybe we've begun to uncover something. What is the story connected with the gorilla?"

Devoli shook his head. "I'd rather not." His grey eyes seemed clouded. "It's dead now, forgotten. Let it stay that way."

"But Doctor—don't you see that if it really is—"

Devoli interrupted with a wave of his hand. "I suppose you're right. We ought to eliminate every guess." The

muscles of his jaw had hardened perceptibly. Quietly, he said: "Do you remember the Whispering Gorilla?"

"Yes, yes, of course I do!" Abbott breathed. "I knew Alan then and he was mixed up in it." His eyes shone as he asked, "Then you mean you've got the original WG here in that—but of course! Then you must be that Dr. Devoli who took the gorilla back to Africa later!"

"I am that Dr. Devoli."

Abbott sucked his breath in sharply. "I remember it now! You're the Dr. Devoli who buried Steve Carpenter when he was killed in Africa . . . and this is the place where Carpenter lived those months he was hiding from Swangler—"

"No," said Devoli, interrupting. "I was living in Sao Paulo then, in Portuguese Angola, far from here."

"But you did know Carpenter. How oddly tangled—"

"Please!" Devoli cried. He regained his composure quickly, and looking into the darkness, he said, "I'm sorry. It's just that the memory is very painful to me. I'd rather not speak about it. . . ."

Presently Abbott said, "But the Whispering Gorilla is alive?" Devoli nodded. "Then the Major obviously knew all about it. But what made him think you were experimenting with it? And what made him think there was more than one gorilla?"

"I don't know."

"What happened when you took him to see it? Anything?"

"Nothing."

"Still," said Abbott, "it seems that the Major is interested in the gorilla, and that somewhere he has gathered peculiar ideas about what you're doing here." He added, "Will you show me the gorilla?"

"He—it must be asleep now, and the way it's been acting—Joe!" Devoli said,

suddenly, "sometimes I inject the gorilla with a special drug I've been developing. Do you think perhaps . . ."

"Sure. Maybe one of the houseboys watched you one day. It might look like experimenting. What does the drug do?"

"A strange thing," said Devoli, softly. "Stranger than I care to say. . . ." He had evidently decided. "Wait here."

RETURNING in a few moments, the Doctor carried a small black bag. He gave Abbott one of the verandah lanterns and led the way along the path to the building that stood by itself. He knocked on the door. There was no answer. In the silence Devoli opened both locks and went in. He took the lantern from Abbott and advanced to the center of the room where the lantern's light lit every corner, and then he knew that the room was empty!

Suddenly the Doctor bent down in one of the corners. The floorboards had been carefully lifted up, nails still showing, and stacked together. Under the place where the boards had been was a large hole, dug in the soft earth under the building. It was a shallow hole, curved to come up in the field behind the house.

"Joe, go to the barn," said Devoli, crisply. "Wake up Tomba. Tell him to get my rifle. Quickly, for the love of Heaven!"

Abbott ran to the barn. Tomba, the tall Senegalese, had wakened instantly. He fastened a stout belt to his middle, from which hung a broad, sheathed knife like a large machete. Then, from a hidden leather case, the native took out a high-powered express rifle and a box of shells. He had responded automatically, without a word.

Dr. Devoli was leaning over the bed when they ran in. Tomba had hesitated a fraction of a moment when Abbott

waited for him to cross the threshold. Now his large, liquid eyes searched the room swiftly, and finding it empty, they grew composed.

The Doctor spoke briefly to Tomba in a native dialect. Tomba shook his head. Devoli said to Abbott, "He can't get a scent from the bedclothes—too fresh. And the gorilla seems to have escaped with all his clothes. No, wait!"

He stooped under the bed and brought out a large shoe that had been ripped to shreds. "Is this enough, Tomba? Good!" He tossed the shoe to the Senegalese. Abbott watched the native as he held the shoe close to his quivering nostrils, then closed his eyes and kept moving the shoe from one hand to the other, in satisfaction.

Abbott said: "I've got a hunch. Ask Tomba what he knows about the gorilla disappearing."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm not sure—it's just an idea. The way he looked when he came in, as if he half expected to find it gone."

The Doctor addressed Tomba in his native tongue. Tomba nodded vigorously, his eyes still closed. "Tomba!" Devoli cried. "You mean you knew he ran away tonight?"

"Not tonight, boss master. Other night."

"You mean it's happened before?"

Tomba's eyes opened in surprise. "Happen many time. Maybe ten, twenty. Happen many time."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Me think boss master know. Boss master business not Tomba's business."

Dr. Devoli seemed to shake the spell that held him with difficulty. Finally he said, quietly, "Ready?"

"Tomba ready."

"Come on."

band through the long loop of his bag, then followed Tomba to the outside of the house. He started to go back for the lantern when Devoli, reading his mind, said, "We couldn't take it even if we needed it, and we don't with Tomba along." By the time Abbott's eyes had become accustomed to the darkness, they had left the house far behind.

The eager Senegalese went ahead now and then, running about in a crouching position, returning to lead Devoli and Abbott. Presently Abbott realized, from the instinctive bearing he had taken on the stars, that they had made a wide circle around the whole group of houses and were now heading south . . . south, toward the towering fringe of jungle that bordered the quiet plains.

The sky was a field of soot, glittering with stardust. A wind ran through the patches of tall grass, and calls came from lonely animals that wandered over the plain. They had been moving swiftly for perhaps a quarter of an hour when Abbott asked, "Do you know where we're going, Dr. Devoli?"

"To the jungle, as far as I can tell."

The next time Tomba went ahead, Abbott asked, "Can he be trusted?"

"I keep my rifle in his care."

Tomba returned and said, "Animal go in jungle."

"Have you ever followed him before, Tomba?" Devoli asked.

"No, boss master! Tomba be afraid!"

"We want to follow. Are you afraid?"

"Not with boss master and big gun. Tomba not afraid for jungle, only animal."

They went on again, and the terrain grew more difficult. The brush was thicker now, tearing at them with barbs and spines. At first there were trees that stood like solitary sentinels, then

ABBOTT took the rifle, waited a moment as the Doctor slipped a

these too began to group themselves, bound together with long, twisting vines, covered with hideous moss, with lovely night flowers. The jungle had closed in on them, obscuring the sky, black and evil. Life breathed all about them, malodorous, simply, whispering, piercing the night with cries of surging, fear-plagued things that crawled and crept and flew. They stumbled through grasping marshes, the air moist and fever-laden and fetid, and the parasitic vines reached for them like living tentacles.

Abbott, hard-pressed to keep pace with Tomba, his scarcely-healed thigh wound throbbing, held Devoli, but the aged Doctor kept brushing his hand away, refusing assistance though his breathing was labored and harsh. Abbott knew only the comfort of the gun he held, his fingers caressing the cold barrel as if for reassurance. Once he asked, "How far are we going to follow it?"

"Until we find him. He can't . . . have gone far if he's done this before . . . he's always been back by morning."

"But it could easily travel miles through these trees. Why don't we wait for it to return?"

"I've got to find out what he does here, now that I know he comes . . ." Devoli's breathing was fierce. "Don't ask me any questions . . . please . . . please. . . ."

TOMBA saw it first. It was no more than the merest patch of light, quivering in the distance. The giant black cocked his ears and listened to the new sound. It was like a massed whisper, soft, guttural. Tomba led them forward cautiously now, changing the direction of his approach to keep the wind coming toward them, until the leaping tendrils of the fire were distinct, and the vast shadows that sur-

rounded it had begun to take form . . .

They were forty yards away when they first realized what they were looking at. Tomba stopped, and when Devoli and then Abbott crept past him, he followed Abbott. Closer and closer they inched, until the dark, squatting forms ahead were no more than a few yards away. Abbott stared at the scene before him.

There was a clearing there in the jungle, a triangular wedge, lighted by a wood fire. Beginning a few feet from the edge of the fire were rows of gorillas, great, mute, shaggy beasts that sat in silence now, forming crowded, concentric rings. In the center of the clearing, close beside the fire, sat a single gorilla. It was dressed like a man, wearing a shirt, a crudely knotted tie, a coat and trousers and one shoe—for the other foot was bare.

Dr. Devoli gasped something, and instantly Abbott closed a hand over the Doctor's mouth, until, feeling the old man grow quiet, he released him and lay quietly beside him.

The gorilla in the center seemed to be paying no attention to the others, though they watched him with steady, unmoving eyes. The central gorilla was holding a long, sharpened stick over the fire, turning it as one might a spit. Now, as he pulled out the stick to inspect it, Abbott saw that a medium-sized bird had been run through with the stick. The gorilla was cooking it over the fire! The bird's head and feet had been torn off, the feathers carefully plucked, and the skin had been broiled to an even brown.

The gorilla examined the bird, removed it from the stick, and began to tear it apart, devouring it and spitting the bones into the fire. Now the other gorillas—there must have been several score—moved restlessly, and from some came low, disturbed sounds.

ABBOTT lay in the tangled grass, unable to move, feeling something of the nameless fear inherent in nightmares. From blurred eyes, fighting the weakness that swept through him, he watched the gorilla that was dressed like a man, staring, horribly fascinated, into the pinpoints of its eyes where the reflected fire danced. . . .

When the gorilla had finished eating, it continued to sit there, looking into the fire, feeding it occasionally from a pile of wood that lay nearby. Now the great whisper that Tomba had first heard came again, the sound of these gorillas, harsh and querulous.

The gorilla dressed like a man turned its head from side to side, listening.

Then, slowly, it stood up. It uttered several dry, rasping sounds and the other gorillas answered it. The conversation, if such it was, went back and forth for a minute—the single voice and the chorused answer, though sometimes one or two alone answered. Then the central gorilla sat down. It put its head in its arms and began rocking to and fro. Once it looked up and stared about it strangely. Slowly, the rigidity of its great neck relaxed. Its face was buried again in its huge hands . . . and then, in the deep silence, there came muffled sounds filled with anguish. The gorilla was crying!

Suddenly, hell broke loose. Later Abbott remembered how Devoli had sprung up from the ground, he remembered seeing the Doctor's firelit figure trying to reach the gorilla, and the black sea that had swallowed him. The bag he had carried had been flung high into air. It was an odd thing to remember, that bag, hanging in the blood-red glow of light over the fire. Abbott hadn't seen it come down. . . .

Powerful hands seized him. Fangs came alive in the darkness, and surging, shaggy forms, ever closer, until he

could no longer breathe. Through the chaos and terror that had engulfed him, one thought alone remained—the open-holstered gun at his hip. He fought like a madman, writhing, smashing, until he tore one of his arms free, finding the gun—

He still beld it, after he had been dropped to the ground. In the sudden silence, he heard the deep, whispering voice speak: "Put down the gun!"

Abbott's hand trembled, loosened, dropped the gun.

The Whispering Gorilla was standing a few feet away. One of its great arms sheltered Dr. Devoli. The Doctor had fallen to his knees. His clothes had been torn from him, and his face shone with blood. The gorilla lifted the Doctor in its arms. Around the three men the other gorillas stood motionless.

Devoli's eyes opened. "Take . . . us . . . home . . ." he gasped.

The Whispering Gorilla gazed immutably at the aged, still man in its arms. "Yes, Devoli," it said, "I'll take you home."

Its voice, low, throbbing, had frightened Abbott more than anything else. It spoke to the other gorillas and two of them came from the edge of the clearing. One of them bent and turned Tomba over. The native's eyes were wide open, staring without emotion into the leathery face. The gorilla lifted Tomba; the other took Abbott. . . .

ABBOTT looked up into Major Brook's face and he thought: this doesn't make sense. No continuity, he thought. He remembered so little. The slow and gradual ebbing of consciousness, the numbing pain that had swept everything before it, the feeling of movement, the thought—it could not have been long before—that they were almost home. And now the Major. It must have taken no more than a few

seconds for Abbott to come to full awareness, to restore meaning and order to what he had seen and heard during the very moments he was recovering, but time had become a pain-filled eternity.

Instants before he had heard men

talking about Tomba as they had carried him away. Devoli was gone. There seemed to be lanterns everywhere, moving about in the surrounding fields like gigantic fire-flies. Abbott was lying on the ground, the Major standing over him, and beside the Major



Abbott heard the deep whispering voice, "Put down that gun"



stood several men, two of whom held lanterns. All this came slowly into focus as Abbott propped himself up and tried to rise. And then, turning ever so slightly, into his field of vision came the forms of three gorillas. They had been standing on the other side of him, as

silent and unmoving as automatons.

A thousand stars came swirling out of the night to blind him. He felt his arms buckle under his weight, felt himself falling back to the soft, wet earth. Pain stabbed through his chest, nausea welled up in his throat, and slowly, so

slowly, the world receded again, and sounds grew faint and pleasant, and darkness came rushing. . . .

The last thing he heard was Major Brooks' voice as he said, "Pick him up and carry him to the house." The last thing he felt were the great, hairy arms that lifted him up. It was meaningless to him.

CHAPTER IV

THE gorilla stood at the barred window of his home, and running through his mind were dim shadows that he knew were thoughts. Outside sunlight glinted on an airplane's wings. He watched the plane circle and swoop down with infinite grace. Like a bird, a great bird that carried men in its belly. He knew birds, the birds of the jungle. . . .

"I am Carpenter," he thought. "I must remember. . . ."

For long moments he would forget that, forget why he had to know who he was. He saw another plane dip gently and begin the long glide to the field that bordered the road. Where did the road lead? Had he ever known? All morning the planes had been coming in. They were silent, and that must have been because the men in them had shut off their motors. He knew what motors were. There was a reason for what these men did. They were hiding. They were evil men.

"Evil," he said aloud, and a great bitterness grew within him. "Evil," he thought. *"How simple all judgments are to me. I no longer am concerned with the complexities that make human beings. For me all things require no more than a rudimentary reaction. Pleasant or not pleasant, good or bad, good to eat, bad to eat, friend, enemy . . . evil . . ."*

The world had shrunk. It had be-

come a simple world. Sometimes he felt it was the only world he was happy in, but that when he was not thinking. He was thinking now, because his heart was bitter, because there was an ache in his mind. It was easier to think when emotion seized him. Perhaps that was because emotion was the attribute of human beings. The capacity for emotion was the last link between him and the world he had once known. Was that what Devoli's drugs did?

The drugs. They had come less often. Maybe soon they would be gone. Did he fear what would happen after that? Devoli feared it, but Devoli could not understand. Freedom was waiting for him.

"Free to be an animal," he said aloud. "A gorilla."

As he spoke, the two gorillas who sat on the floor in his house looked up and regarded him. They had been half asleep. They were his friends, Moga and Yawwa. He uttered a soft, reassuring sound to them.

"Which is stranger?" he thought. *"The fact that I am still able to think, however imperfectly, like a man—or the fact that I can speak to these animals? Why do I know that the sound I just made will satisfy them? If I were to translate the sound to human speech, what would it mean? What do they think of the other sounds I make, the sounds that are words?"*

They feared him. That much he knew. He had seen it the first time he had gone to the jungle. The way they watched him as he walked on the ground when they went through the trees . . . though the first time he had tried, he had been as skillful as they, his arms instinctive in their power, his sense of balance perfect. These were the things he had never had to learn, the things he owed to the blood that coursed in his veins.

They were scarcely thoughts as they raced through his mind; they were ideas, misty, half-formed, fragmentary and fleeting. . . .

He had been alone in the beginning. The first time he had gone to the jungle he had met . . . *one of his kind* . . . it had been a female, and she had fled, only to return later, when he offered no pursuit. Little by little, others had come out of the deep recesses of the jungle, to live here at its edge. The word of this strange one of them had spread. *Olowga*, they called him. The strange one.

They had seen the things he did, the things of which his mind was capable. The house he had built of boughs. The pit he had dug to trap a water buffalo. The time he had directed them and caught half a herd of deer. The great forked stick he had used to kill a python. The water he carried from the river, in skins he had sewn with unwound hits of vine. The fire he had made one night, and how they had scattered in fear and panic. They had learned that he could control it, and they had come to expect it of him.

Would these things persist? He knew without thinking. They were still the attributes of the man within him, the man who was dying away, the expression of skills he was losing. Or was it that he no longer wanted them? He had long since begun to feel that the difference between cooked and raw meat was immaterial. He had given up his house. He often went through the trees now. He found pleasure in being with the others. He knew he wanted the jungle, that something deep and fundamental within him wanted it, though he sometimes returned to it in the clothes that Devoli had given him, though he spoke to them sometimes in human words.

One day he would go to the jungle

and he would not come back. He had thought of it the night before. What had made him come back? And that too, he knew without thinking. It was the deep love, the devotion he felt for Devoli. . . .

HIS mind was growing cloudy again, but he fought it. He had to remember. The night before, when he had brought Devoli back from the jungle, he had found these strange men everywhere. They had been looking for Devoli. Was this man who led them Devoli's friend? What should he have done, finding these men? He had wanted to ask Devoli, but Devoli had been sleepy and tired.

No, that was not it. Devoli had been hurt. He had been . . . the word would not come to him. Unconscious. That was it. He could not ask Devoli.

The man had been greatly afraid of him at first. He was their leader. The others called him Major Von Bruckner. He must have been a German. The Major had come across him and Moga and Yawwa, carrying Devoli and Tomba and the friend, and the Major had called for others in a loud, fear-stricken voice, and men had come running with their guns and lanterns, surrounding them. But they had not tried to hurt him. He had seen that at once. It had confused him, knowing the man was evil, for he had known it the first time he had seen him.

And then the Major had shouted to him. Put Devoli down on the ground, he had shouted. He, confused, unable to ask Devoli, not knowing if the man was a friend of Devoli's, had put Devoli down. The other men had cried out in surprise. They had been amazed. And when the Major shouted again, telling Moga and Yawwa to put down Tomba and the friend, he, Olowga, had told them, speaking his own language, the

language he knew instinctively, to put down the bodies.

Later he was glad he had spoken softly to Moga and Yawwa, for the man seemed to think that all three of them would understand him. When the Major asked them to do other things, he conveyed the orders to Moga and Yawwa, speaking less often than he signalled them, for their language was not only of sounds, and it had seemed as if they understood everything.

He had been able to think, the night before. He had thought it would be good to let the man think what he did, but he could not remember why. Was it because he thought that if the Major was Devoli's friend, that he should have known that only he, Olowga, could understand. But he did not know what Devoli had told the man. He knew only that there was one thing Devoli had not told him . . . who *he* was.

Then the Major had told them to stand away, and he had been very careful with Devoli, seeing he was hurt, and he had told the others to call a doctor immediately. It made him wonder seeing that, and also because the man was concerned with Tomba and the friend of Devoli. And when he and Moga and Yawwa had obeyed the man, the others had put away their guns.

The man had spoken to the others, exultantly, that the gorillas would take orders from anybody. He thought that Devoli's training had instilled unquestioning obedience in them. It had made him wonder, knowing the man was wrong, but he obeyed, and Moga and Yawwa with him. Even later, when the man had ordered them to go to his house, this little house that had been Olowga's home for so long, they had gone.

The hole he had made under the floor had been filled in, and the boards nailed down again. Who had done it? Moga

had wanted to run away during the night. He had said that his great strength could destroy the house and the men who stood outside guarding it. He did not know why Olowga wanted to stay there. But he, Olowga, knew. Devoli had been hurt. He had to stay to see what would happen to him. He had to find out what these strange men were doing here.

Another plane dropped silently out of the sky.

"OF course, I sent whatever you required—your naval officers, technicians, material—all this at a time when we can hardly spare a thing. I had expected matters to develop more slowly, so, naturally, I was curious, Von Bruckner, though the affairs of the Intelligence Division are best left alone."

Major Von Bruckner was about to speak when he saw the transport plane coming in. He watched it as it fish-tailed across the adjoining field, looking unreal because its outlines were blurred by the heat. He was glad of the momentary diversion; he had almost agreed.

It would have been an error. Colonel-General Gleichenhaus had not flown in from Tripoli to be told that this was none of his business. The General had made that clear by the fact that he chose to speak to Von Bruckner in English, though he spoke it with a horrible accent. It was as if to say that what transpired between them was not intended for the ears of the Major's staff officers, ignoring the fact that three of them, Mayer, Beiderman, and Prinzler, sat a few feet across the screened verandah, and all spoke English. It was a sign, nothing more, but one did not ignore signs from Generals of the Afrika Korps.

"Of course," said the Major, politely.

"Captain Mayer, how many planes have come in so far?"

The Captain jumped to his feet. "The last for today arrived a moment ago, Major."

Von Bruckner had kept up the pretence by addressing Mayer in German, and now, in English, he said to the General, "I believe everything is in order, General. If you care to join me?"

As they waited for the staff car to drive up, the Major went on. "As you say, General, we had expected to proceed more slowly. My original intention was to win this Dr. Devoli as a friend, posing, as you know, as a Major Brooks of British Intelligence. However, by a stroke of luck, I discovered at the last moment that Devoli was harboring an American agent. An accomplice was at that very moment in Tiola, and both these men had taken part in a daring raid on the Dakar railroad yards recently. Perhaps you heard of it? No? Well, under the circumstances I had to move more quickly. I am sure you will agree we could waste no time in taking this place over."

General Gleichenhaus stepped into the car and the Major followed. The three staff officers sat in the front seats. "But how could you hope to win this Dr. Devoli after such a move?" the General asked, with a frown. "I understood you to say that his confidence was essential."

"By a stroke of luck, I discovered that too much emphasis had been placed upon that aspect. It developed that the gorillas were so well trained in obedience that they immediately took our orders."

"You are positive?"

"Of course."

"I can only say, Von Bruckner, that you have been very lucky, to use your

expression. But I believe the English have also an expression of pushing one's luck too far. One must plan. One must think. One must organize. Luck is for anyone, with no favorites."

"Of course."

Von Bruckner's impassive face gave no sign of his feelings. He detested this little, self-important General with his decorations and disapproving air. What did he know of thinking or planning, seated at a desk in Tripoli, signing papers? Here he, Von Bruckner, by swift movements and quick deductions, had accomplished a task which might have taken months, and this pale General frowned and lectured.

At least he would find nothing to criticize in what had been accomplished in a scant twenty-one hours. There was organization.

THE adjoining field, a plain that stretched flat and smooth for miles beside this road, had been made into an airport. During the night power mowers had cut five lanes across the field. The cut grass had been left in place, so that from the air or the road, the field looked the same, but small signal flags marked the lanes as runways.

A long shed had been erected next to Devoli's barn, housing six large trucks that had come in before dawn. Another structure sheltered gasoline tanks; a third, ordnance supply; a fourth, quartermaster, and a amply stocked. A wing had been added to Devoli's house, to serve as barracks for the hundred-odd men who had arrived from Dakar and Tiola. All had been landscaped, even with large trees, and including the new kitchen, all had been painted the same faded colors of the original buildings. Sixteen planes had come in that day, and they had been unloaded, serviced and re-fueled with

dispatch, hidden from view during the operations. It was no mean accomplishment.

The car had driven half a mile down the road before it swerved off and headed toward a grove of trees. They were almost upon the grove before they saw the men there. The General took the salute and inspected the scene.

Eight or ten men were there, grimy and covered with sweat. They were busy with what appeared to be three machines. The machines were a mass of gears and wheels, and three naval Lieutenants Faber, Diemler, and Braun, paused in their work long enough to be introduced to the General. In another corner of the grove, other men were hammering a huge affair of canvas and wood. Even as they watched, the canvas began to form the outline of a dummy destroyer, mounted on concealed wheels, complete even to wooden guns and painted turrets and rafts.

"Faber," said the Major, "how near completion are you?"

Lieutenant Faber patted his machine. "This one is done, Major. Only the shell remains to be put on, a matter of a few minutes."

"Excellent, Faber. Do you think you could demonstrate for General Gleichenhaus?"

Faber clicked his heels and saluted. "An honor, General."

Waiting in the car, then, Von Bruckner, feeling the General's continued silence an invitation to speak, said, "You remember the great importance which our naval office in Tokyo attached to the small submarines of the Japanese?" Absently, he had spoken in German, but the General, stony-faced, answered in English.

"It amounted to nonsense in the end."

Inwardly furious, Von Bruckner persisted in German. "*Gewiss*, but for

good reasons. First, their limited range; they had to be transported to within a hundred miles of their objective. Second, only two small torpedoes were carried, and while the submarine itself was meant to form a third, large torpedo, there is no record of any submarines having done so, although—"

"Are you questioning the willingness of the Japanese to die in action?"

"I did not say that," Von Bruckner forced a smile. "There are always men who will commit suicide to achieve a necessary success, even though the supply of such men is limited and uncertain. But you must remember that warships are equipped with detectors which can hear the submarines long before they are close enough to attempt ramming."

"It seems to me," said Gleichenhaus, "that we are discussing matters far afield from those which usually concern the army." He kept his eyes on his boots, deliberating his words, before he added, "I am to assume, however, that you have found a way to aid the navy?"

Von Bruckner saw Faber approaching them, and realizing that the conversation was about to end, he decided to end it by sticking a verbal dagger into the General. "Not the navy, sir, but the Third Reich." He turned abruptly to Faber and said, "I see you're ready, Lieutenant."

THEY followed Faber back to the machines. The completed one had been covered with a shell, and it now completely resembled a tiny submarine, though it rested on three wheels. Lieutenant Faber waved and climbed through a small hatch into the submarine. When he closed the hatch, his only means of vision was through the periscope.

The dummy destroyer had been

hooked up to two motorcycles, and at a signal from Captain Beidermann, the motorcycles started off across the field, towing the huge dummy ship behind them. When it was some two hundred yards away, Faber's tiny U-boat started forward, following the destroyer at a much slower speed.

The destroyer kept pulling away and the U-boat followed for a few minutes, the periscope fixed on its stern. Then, slowly, the U-boat manoeuvred in a smart turn and paralleled the course of the destroyer, though much slower. A few minutes more and the U-boat nosed around so that its bow pointed an imaginary line which the destroyer would soon cross. And now the destroyer began to zig-zag, altering its speed from moment to moment, while the U-boat adjusted and stayed close.

On came the destroyer. Suddenly the U-boat hissed once—twice, a third time! From its bow sprang three tubular projectiles, each on two wheels. They hit the ground and kept going, each in a slightly different direction, fanning out to form a triangle, of which the U-boat was the apex. Instantly the destroyer swerved. It swung its starboard sharply and the first projectile missed it by a wide margin—but the second hit the port side amidships squarely and went through it. And now, as the destroyer slackened speed, the U-boat, which had kept going in, came up to the destroyer and stopped.

IT was over. The motorcycles began towing the destroyer back, and Faber came out of the U-boat batch, driving it back. Laughter and cries of approval had followed the demonstration, but General Gleichenhaus only nodded his head sharply. "That is all, Major?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Please see that my compliments are presented to the Lieutenant." So saying, he went back to the car, the Major and the other officers following. As the car rode back to the house, the General said, "Perhaps, Major, I did not understand completely what your plans were when I heard them at the Berlin conference."

Naturally, Von Bruckner thought, because the plans weren't really discussed there; only the mechanics of the plans. But he said, "No?"

"For instance, Major, I perceive that your clever duplicates of the destroyer and the U-boat are for the purposes of training, and I think they are admirably conceived. Likewise, the three naval officers who were sent here are U-boat specialists. But tell me, Major, do you hope to teach your gorillas to operate such U-boats?"

"Not only these, sir, but the real ones, which are run exactly the same way, with several important changes that are—"

"In fewer words, Major, you believe that you can teach gorillas the very complex business of operating a U-boat, and not only that, but learning to navigate and stalk other ships? Gorillas?"

"Yes, sir," Von Bruckner said, doggedly. "These gorillas have an incredible intelligence. They have been taught to speak, to operate other machinery, to do many tasks. I do not expect that it will be an easy matter to teach them, and we may find that certain things will have to be changed. Also, I do not expect that it will be done quickly. I am prepared to spend a long time here."

"It is very peaceful here," the General said, pointedly, adding quickly, "Tell me, Major, why must you have gorillas to man your boats?"

"As I mentioned before, sir, the

Japanese experiments failed for good reason. If our gorillas work out, we will overcome the difficulties inherent in such small ships. Our range of operation will be twice theirs, because there will be no necessity for our craft to return. All will be expected—taught, in fact—to destroy themselves by ramming the enemy warships. The torpedoes are incidental, a hope, one might say, but the other, predicated on the gorilla's complete fearlessness, and its inability to foresee its own death or fear it—"

"And what is to prevent your gorilla's U-boats from being heard?"

Major Von Bruckner had avoided the point in the hopes of just this question. That it was sarcastically put suited him even more.

"A most interesting idea, General," he said, quietly. "The model U-boat you saw operated was powered by an engine. It is the noise of the engine and of the generators that warships detect. But that engine can be shut off, and the method of propulsion changed to an incredibly powerful gear *which uses nothing but muscle power.*"

Von Bruckner paused then, waiting for the question. The General, aware by now of what Von Bruckner was doing, hesitated a full minute before he said, irritably: "And the muscle power for this powerful gear of yours—"

"Will come from the incredibly powerful muscles of the gorilla!" the Major finished, smiling. "When the enemy is sighted, the engine is shut off. The generator is silenced, and the gorilla wears an oxygen mask. He propels his craft silently. Perhaps he lies in wait for the enemy outside a harbor; perhaps he enters the harbor itself. His intelligence guides him to the largest ship, or a pre-determined ship. He releases his torpedoes and follows them himself. . . ."

The General regarded Von Bruckner in astonishment. "Utterly fantastic!" he spluttered. "I cannot believe that you seriously—"

"If I may interrupt the General," Von Bruckner pursued, "the Soviets are using trained dogs to hurl themselves at tanks, carrying large explosive charges."

"But the intelligence required for a dog to blow up a tank—"

"Assuredly, but the intelligence of these gorillas is beyond all belief. They approach humans."

"Do you mean to sit here and tell me, Major, that you ordered this vast quantity of material, these technicians and officers, in the furtherance of this . . . this fantastic scheme?"

"I expect to be here for some time, General, and I thought it wiser to have whatever I needed at once. Besides, I had full authority from Marshall Von Zweig to ask for what I wanted."

THE car was driving up to the house now, and the General said, "I can't believe it. No, I can't." He seemed to be mumbling to himself, then he said, "I really must see these gorillas of yours."

The Major opened the door for the General, and a genuine look of disappointment seemed to cross his hard features. "I regret, sir," he murmured, "that I am under strict orders to allow no one not expressly of this command to see the gorillas. No one, my dear General, by order of Marshall Von Zweig." And he added, mentally, "See what you can do with that, my pompous little goat."

At that moment, as the General came out of the car, the screened door of Devoli's house opened and a man and a girl came out on the verandah. General Gleichenhaus glanced at them, then looked inquiringly at the Major. The

girl was a beautiful thing. Von Bruckner, startled by the appearance of the girl, whom he had kept out of sight from the time the General arrived, said quickly, "She is Jeanne Chaumont, a Colonial French police agent from Dakar. She has been very useful to me."

"I don't doubt it," said Gleichenhaus, with a crooked smile. "I see you did order everything you'll need here for a long stay."

Von Bruckner, furious with himself for his unfortunate expression, persisted. "She is Dr. Friedrich's assistant too. The Doctor is taking care of Devoli. How is Dr. Devoli?" he called to Friedrich, raising his voice.

Dr. Friedrich, a tall, moustached man, shook his head. "Herr Abbott is doing nicely," he ventured, "but Dr. Devoli is another matter. A man of his age cannot be expected to survive experiences which—"

He didn't finish what he was saying, for, suddenly, forgetting for the moment where he was, chagrin still burning in him like a live coal, Von Bruckner leaped up the stairs and seized the Doctor by the coat lapels. "What do you mean—survive?" he ground out, his face as grey as stone. "You incompetent fool! I told you Devoli must not be allowed to die! He is vital to our plans!"

Dr. Friedrich bit his lip until it was white. "I did not say he was dying, Herr Major. He has suffered a concussion and shock. His wounds are infected. But he will not die, Herr Major. I will see to it, Herr Major."

Von Bruckner's hands dropped to his sides. Now that his rage had burned itself out, he became aware of the sudden stillness. He turned back to the General, fighting to compose himself. His officers, Mayer, Prinzler, Beidermann, had masked themselves with

blank looks. Several soldiers, passing by, had stopped and now rapidly walked on. The girl had moved into the background. In this dead silence, Gleichenhaus let a sigh escape him as he said, "Perhaps, Major, you will have another stroke of luck, and the essential Dr. Devoli will not die, after all."

The Major said: "Let us hope so. In the meantime, General, will you do me the honor of lunching with my staff?"

Gleichenhaus turned and sat down in the car. "Thank you, Major, but it is quite impossible. I stole a few hours from most urgent duties to see for myself what you were doing. I will have to account for the materiel you requisitioned, you understand." He smiled his sour little smile. "I have seen quite enough. My plane is ready, of course?"

The Major glanced at Prinzler, who nodded. "Of course."

"Goodbye, gentlemen. Good strokes of luck."

THE car lurched away as they saluted. Von Bruckner looked after the car bitterly. The little General had heard a story that would have stupefied a man with brains. The idea behind the use of the gorillas was unqualifiedly brilliant, but all that smug, blind little man had said was, "Fantastic!" What would he say in the report he had so transparently hinted he would write?

To the devil with him! What did he matter? If—no, when the project had been successfully completed, and he had no doubt—very little, at any rate—that it would be successful, he would remember to deal with Gleichenhaus. But that was a long way off, and meanwhile he might create trouble. Von Bruckner remembered with a sudden qualm the cases of champagne he

had ordered, the smoked hams, the fish. . . . A lot of capital could be made of that. . . .

Nevertheless he smiled as he turned to Jeanne Chaumont, offering her his arm and saying to his officers, "Miss Chaumont will substitute for the General, gentlemen. I believe the gain is ours."

Possibly because the remark was more successful than the Major had anticipated, judging by the pleased grins of his officers, or perhaps because the mere sight of this lovely woman raised Von Bruckner's spirits—she was at once a reminder of past luck and a promise for the future—he showed no irritation when Dr. Friedrich stopped him at the threshold, saying, "Herr Major, have I your permission to see the native Tomba? His condition is critical."

"Ack, how wrong you are," Von Bruckner laughed, good-naturedly. "I had him hanged an hour ago." He bowed gallantly as he opened the door for the girl, and he added, "I am afraid, Doctor, that unless Herr Abbott shows more co-operation, you will shortly lose another patient."

CHAPTER V

IT WAS all like a dream to him. He had lain in the little house all morning, sleeping fitfully in the stifling heat, standing occasionally before the barred window to watch the men busy with their trucks and motorcycles, unable to understand their activity, hoping for the sight of Devoli. The sun had passed its zenith when the wind changed, and the smell of the jungle had come, sweet and tormenting. More than once, Moga had tested the bars, but he, Olowga, had been unyielding, and finally Moga had slept again, stirring at each slight sound.

And then the Major had come, opening the door, telling Yawwa to go outside. But Olowga's eyes had told Yawwa not to move, and when Olowga himself had gone out, the Major seemed satisfied. He had seen the men gathered outside, unerringly felt the tenseness in them, but they had been unarmed. He hardly cared what they wanted, but it was so good to be outside again. The Major had kept talking to him, asking him to speak, finally ordering him. Olowga had not spoken. He spoke to no one but Devoli.

And then he had heard these men talking among themselves, and dimly, he had thought it was odd, the way they sounded. He had heard them the night before, and sometimes during that day, and he had understood what they were saying, though the sounds they made were strange. And then, suddenly, knifing through his brain had come the thought, the realization: "*They speak German—and I, Olowga, understand them because Carpenter spoke German! I am Carpenter! I must remember!*"

It had awakened him. He had felt the blood pounding through his brain. He had been able to think. When they told him to get into a truck and rode him down the road, he had remembered the road, and his magnificent eyes had taken in everything these men had done, the houses they had built, the grass they had cut, the things they had so carefully hidden. He had seen the men in the grove long before the truck turned off the road.

And his ears, keen, attuned to the least rustle of a leaf, had picked up much of the things the men in the car behind had said—how they had wondered whether he could really talk, how necessary Devoli might prove to be, how important it was for them to understand what had transpired in the jungle

the night before. He had understood, then, that it was for him to understand what these men wanted. . . .

The machine had fascinated him. He had stroked its dark, gleaming shell, understanding instantly that it was a small replica of a German U-boat. Behind a row of trees a few hundred feet away, he had mentally reconstructed the form of the huge object there, and known it to be a model of a destroyer. He had listened to the patient explanations of the young man in blue, the Lieutenant Faber, as he pressed the buttons that lay under the shell, moving the levers.

Once the Lieutenant Faber had said to the Major, in a quiet voice, "His eyes, Herr Major, his eyes . . . such fire, such intensity. I cannot bear to look into them. But how much of this does he understand?"

"We will know soon enough. Explain everything to him, and then we will see how much he retains each time. Be careful with your pronunciation; Devoli's English is quite precise."

AS he had stood there, listening to everything, he had seen the other men come in. They had stayed close to the trees at first, and the air had been heavy with their fear, with their difficult breathing. He had felt that fear dissipate. Once the Lieutenant had taken his hand and pressed it down on a slender lever, and the machine had quivered with life. Of course he had known that it would, for the Lieutenant had long before explained that this was the motor control.

Carpenter had been a skillful man with machines all his life. His father had owned one of the earliest garages in the days when the automobile was being born, and Carpenter had worked in that garage in his youth. He understood every little mechanism in this

machine. He understood it because it was instinctive in Carpenter. . . .

There was little to understand here, he knew. Everything had been simplified. He watched the Lieutenant climb down into the shell and manoeuvre the machine about, and he thought: "*Shall I show them I know everything? Is it wiser to seem to learn more slowly?*"

But then, like a wave of fever, he had felt his mind grow cloudy. It was like a physical sensation when he was thinking; the other times it had come upon him slowly. Olowga, Olowga, he thought, remembering how he had torn the clothes off himself the night before, bringing Devoli home, his mind decided, the jungle waiting for him, and the hateful clothes torn to rags.

He had no time. *No time.* This mind was not his to control. It played tricks on him. He had to find out quickly what these men wanted. He had to help Devoli quickly, if help was needed.

He had waited until the Lieutenant had come out of the machine, and then, without waiting for a command, he had gently brushed the frightened Lieutenant aside and climbed into the machine. The Major had cried out to him to stop, but he had closed the hatch over himself, and the next moment he was manoeuvring the machine. He had let it run about over the field, turning it this way and that. The periscope had shown him how far he had gone from the grove, and he had started back.

And then, going back, it had come again, the numbness, the ache in his brain. He had cried out, fighting it, beating on his head with his hands—and the violent movement in that cramped space had made him swing over a row of levers. Something under his feet had hissed, and the machine had jolted him, and when he looked

through the periscope, he saw three projectiles darting through the grass, heading straight for the grove!

He had seen the men leap aside, and the projectiles disappear harmlessly, but even after that the men were jumping about and pounding each other, embracing each other. He heard their shouting, their wild outcries, but faintly, far off, as in a dream. As . . . in . . . a . . . dream . . .

He remembered only that he had to stop the machine, and he had stopped it in the grove. He had climbed out and stood there, and heard these men laughing and crying and shouting, and the Major standing before him and saying things to him and the Leutnant Faber, and in the confused disorder of his brain, he had wondered what he had done that had made these men so hysterically jubilant. It had been like a dream . . .

And now he stood there still, moments after he had come out of the machine, watching them. "The torpedoes!" one man shouted. "Show him how to operate the torpedoes!" "Teach him to stalk the destroyer!" another cried. "Navigation in one lesson!" "Make him work the gear! The gear, I say!" "*Sieg heil!*" "Bring out the destroyer! Put a British flag on it!" "*Seig heil! Sieg heil!*"

IT MEANT nothing to him. He was tired. He stood there until the men grew calm, and the Major quieted them. It was strange, he thought, the way the Major could quiet them all by speaking a word. But he had not quieted the happiness that lay in their eyes. Nor had the Major quieted the joy in his voice when he said, "First, Faber, we must show him how to operate the gear! The gear is first in importance, because we must see if his strength is equal to it."

"And the idea of an objective!" Faber cried, trembling with excitement. "We will have him head towards the truck—no, the motorcycle! We will station a motorcycle on the field!"

Leutnant Faber explained the mechanism of the gear. The motor was to be switched off, and he was to put his arms into two cylinders, which, moved back and forth, would propel the machine, while leaving his hands free for other necessary tasks. It was very simple.

When the Leutnant had finished, Olowga made no sign that he had understood. "Begin!" cried the Leutnant. "Enter the machine!"

Olowga stared at him. He had comprehended, vaguely, what he was expected to do. He thought: "*I will kill them all. I can kill them all if I want to.*" Killing was easy for him. Fragments of fresh memories ran through his mind. He often killed in the jungle. It was good to kill. But he had never killed a man. Moga had wanted to kill men that day, and Olowga had forbidden him. Devoli was a man. Yes, that was it. He could not kill these men because they had Devoli with them. There were many of them. What was the Major shouting at him? All their joy was fading. There were too many. If he killed these, by the time he had reached Devoli, they would have killed him . . .

"I don't understand it," said Von Bruckner, worried. "What could have happened to him? Why doesn't he at least show he understands?"

"Get into the machine!" said Faber. "Do as I say!"

Olowga heard the motor coming. It was an automobile, with two people in it, coming to the grove. A man and a girl. A girl. He had not seen a girl since . . . since . . . A little fire began to burn inside his brain. Mem-

ories, always memories, rising from a past that had never belonged to him, and people, ghostly, and words and names, and the fire consuming him . . .

THE car stopped a short distance away and the girl came towards them. The Major quickly headed her off. None heard their voices, but Olowga heard. He heard Prinzler mutter softly to Beidermann, "She has no business here. He is making a fool of himself. He must order her away." And he heard the Major say, "This is no place for you, *fraulein*. Perhaps you had better go back."

"The gorilla," she whispered. "I heard the men talking about it. I heard the strangest stories." He could see her looking past the Major toward him, fascination in her eyes. "For just a moment," she begged, and her hand touched the Major's, pressing it. "Just one little look." And the Major, undecided, yielding as the girl took his arm and led him.

How beautiful she was. He had forgotten how beautiful women were. Once there had been a woman . . . Her hair was long and blonde and it shone like white water, and her skin was like the petals of the blossoms that grew in the jungle. It was so long since he had seen . . . he wanted to feel the touch of—

Her scream paralyzed him, froze him after he had taken the first step toward her! He realized, confusion swirling in his brain, that he had started walking toward the girl, his hands outstretched. Instantly the men had jumped away, the Major swiftly dragging the girl. She had screamed, her voice piercing him like a dagger, drowning out the hoarse shouts of the men. And then he had seen the fear in her eyes, and the horror, and more . . . the loathing . . . and it had brought the

fire that was in him to a blaze that blinded him.

But now he stood there, afraid to move lest he frighten her, but he could not take his eyes away from her. The image of a woman's face kept rising from the ashes of his memory, superimposing itself over the vision of this girl. She was bringing back things that he had long forgotten, that had been hurried. He kept looking at her, remembering.

"How he looks at me," the girl whispered. Calmness was returning to her. "He seems to be looking right through me . . ."

"Strange, the way he started towards you," Von Bruckner mused. "I could have sworn his whole body trembled when you screamed." An odd smile flitted across his face. "As if the sight of you . . ." Whatever he had been about to say was left unfinished. "Faber!" he called. "Try once more, please."

And now, Faber had hardly spoken to him when he climbed swiftly back into the machine. A great, unquenchable fury had welled up within him, and because he could think more easily now, he knew the danger of what he felt. He tried to force the image of the girl, and of what he had seen in her eyes, from his mind. Moments before he had been sinking into the welcome abyss of forgetfulness . . .

The motorcycle started across the field. He followed it, then turned off the motor and began moving the gear. He felt the power of his great arms surge through the cylinders that held them, he felt the machine shake with the rage and anguish that beat in his breast. There was forgetfulness again in this, in the knowledge of his strength, in its use. He had to overcome his emotions, for in them lay the secret of pain . . .

THE motorcycle had become a living antagonist for him. The enormous power of his arms was moving the machine faster than it had moved before. The motorcycle twisted and turned, unable to shake him off. He saw the driver's face once. Fear had slowly begun to grip the man as the machine followed. Not that he could catch it, but that he always spun about in such a way as to head it off. It was good to feel himself working, to be living again, feeling his mind grow numb again.

Later, when the motorcycle had gone back to the grove, and the Lieutenant Faber's form had come into view of the periscope, waving him to stop, he obeyed. He had no eyes then for anyone but the girl. He heard the overjoyed laughter of the men, witnessing their demonstrations once more, aware that their jubilation was greater than before.

He was very tired when he crawled out of the machine. He stood there, stretching his huge, hairy arms, licking his chops, letting his eyes roam over these men as they danced and hugged each other. He had done more—far, far more, than any of them had dreamt he might. He saw Von Bruckner, in his exuberance, sweep the girl up in his arms and kiss her, and a moment later, apologizing, the girl had laughed at him.

He thought about that all the way back to his house. His mind had divided itself into two separate entities. One mind was clear and understanding, the other dark and brooding and numb. But it was the clear mind that directed him when they came back to his house.

Lieutenant Faber, brashly riding in the back of the truck with him, had put a metal brassard on his arm. "I order you not to remove this!" he had told Olowga. How bold and confident these

men had become. But he knew what they wanted to do, and when the Lieutenant brought him to his door, he, Olowga, went in swiftly and closed the door on the Lieutenant.

He kept his weight against it and called Moga to him, and then he took off the brassard and put it on Moga's arm. The Lieutenant, startled, was pounding on the door, demanding that it be opened. When Olowga let the door open, the Lieutenant hesitantly walked in, and Olowga saw him recoil from the heavy odor that lay there. The Lieutenant said to Moga, "You must stay here." Then, he pointed to Olowga, who was closest to him, and he ordered him to come out.

So, in the end, it was Olowga who went through the tests on the field again—and later, maneuvering it so that Yawwa took the second brassard, Olowga came a third time.

As for why he did it, he himself was uncertain. He had wanted to see the girl again. Her face haunted him. But when he came back to the field the second time, she was gone. Nevertheless he had done what they wanted of him, and he had seen their growing acceptance of his intelligence, and their undiminished joy. He had gone the third time, toward dusk, because he knew he had to, but the reason for it was lost. He wandered through the maze of voices and directions without really understanding anything, carried by instinct . . .

With one difference. It had never happened before.

Somehow, as his mind had grown weary, he knew it was for the last time. "*I am Carpenter*," he had been able to tell himself, but nothing within him had stirred. Yet, strangely, he had known that something should have happened.

It was as if he had found, some-

where, the strength of purpose to carry him here . . . but no further. In that amazing moment, in that last bewildering spasm of clarity, he had been like a drowning man who knew he was going down for the last time, but who welcomed the surcease from struggle.

He looked out of his little window into the gathering twilight, and he remembered Devoli, and one thought spun slowly in the murkiness of his brain. . . .

CHAPTER VI

SHE came into Devoli's room quietly, holding the door open. Dr. Friedrich glanced up at her and nodded. "Thank you for returning so soon, *fraulein*," he said, wearily. "I don't know what I would have done without you." He got up and went to the door. "I will be here in this next room. Perhaps I can sleep for an hour."

"How is he?"

"The same. A short while ago he regained consciousness for a little while, poor man. He babbled incoherently. Meaningless things."

"Do you remember anything he said, Doctor?"

Dr. Friedrich held his hands over his eyes. They were bloodshot, half closed. "No. My English is not very good, besides. If he should wake up again, please call me immediately." He swallowed, and his eyes looked away. "Immediately," he repeated. "This case is very important to me. You understand, *fraulein*." Then he went out.

She sat in a chair beside Devoli's bed. How old and worn he looked. His white hair was still matted, and scarcely closed cuts and wounds covered his face and arms, though the larger ones had been bandaged. A large blue vein in the center of his high

forehead dilated as he breathed, and the sound of his breathing was shallow and irregular. Now and then he moved as he slept, and his long, burnt fingers opened and closed on invisible objects. . . .

How long she sat there before she heard him speak, she didn't know. She had turned away, leaning on the window sill, looking out into the field where a solitary airplane had warmed up and left, the last of those to go that day. When she heard Devoli's voice, she turned back quickly. His wrinkled eyelids had opened, and the hot, feverish eyes were looking at her. He looked at her for a long time.

"Who are you?" he breathed.

"Jeanne," she said, softly. "I am a friend of Alan Bradford's."

"Where . . . where is he?"

"Safe, in Tiola."

"Where is . . . Abbott?"

"He has gone somewhere. He will be back later."

The old man was silent, then, presently, he said, "Who was . . . the man that was sitting here . . . before?"

"A doctor. You are very ill."

"He . . . is a German," Devoli breathed. "Where did he . . . come from? And the noises . . . I hear noises . . . all day . . ." His eyes were rolling back into his head and his hands were clutching. "Tell . . . Abbott . . . to be careful of Major Brooks . . ." he gasped.

He lay very still for a few moments and then he began to speak again, and the girl listened intently. "Carpenter . . ." he moaned. "He must be careful of him . . . the drug . . . not much left . . . give it to him . . . I owe him his . . . life . . . Be careful . . ."

"Doctor," she said, softly, taking his hand in hers. "You must make an effort to tell me what you mean. What drug?"

DEVOLI seemed to stiffen as she spoke. He opened his fever-laden eyes again and looked at her. "I . . . must trust you, Jeanne," he said, his chest laboring with the effort of speaking. "Go to the . . . cabinet. Take the large . . . can of tobacco. In it . . . at the bottom . . . you will find three capsules . . . they are all that is . . . left. I lost . . . the rest . . . last night. Give it to . . . Bradford . . . for Carpenter . . . He will understand . . ."

"No," she said quickly insistently, "You must tell me. What is the drug for?"

"For the gorilla. If . . . he becomes . . . unmanageable . . . give it to him. It . . . it will clear his . . . mind . . ."

She got up swiftly and went to the cabinet. She opened the can of pipe tobacco there and took out three capsules. They were some two inches long, filled with a pale green powder. Carefully, she wrapped them in a bit of handkerchief and pocketed them. When she returned to Devoli's bedside, she asked, "Who is Carpenter?"

Though the old man's eyes were open, he did not seem to see her. "Carpenter," he gasped. "Forgive me . . ."

He spoke after that, but she didn't understand what he was saying. Once he repeated his instructions to her, but brokenly, meaninglessly, and if she had not heard him before, she would not have understood. She listened to the throaty whisper of his voice as he went on endlessly, then she got up and went into the next room.

She shook Dr. Friedrich gently, and he sat up at once.

"Yes, *fräulein*? He is awake?" He put his shoes on and followed her back to Devoli. There Friedrich sat down, listening to the old man. After a few minutes he forced a little glass of liquid down Devoli's throat. It spilled on his chin and wet his pillow, and the

doctor gave up. "What is he saying, *fräulein*?" he asked. "The Major must know."

She shook her head. "I'll tell him."

After awhile, Dr. Friedrich said, "You can go now, *fräulein*. I will sit here with him. He is much better now."

She went out as quietly as she had come in. Downstairs she heard Von Bruckner's voice, raucous and joyful, loudest of all in the chorus that was singing the Horst Wessel song to the accompaniment of an accordion. Smiling, she entered the room and went to the Major.

2

JOE ABBOTT sat down at the table without answering the taunting greeting of Major Von Bruckner. Time enough later to heave a bowl of soup in his sneering face, Abbott thought. Meanwhile it would be better to see what was going on, and the way champagne was flowing, he guessed he had a good chance to find out.

Why had they brought him here, invited him to this dinner? It was one of the myriad mysteries that confronted him. Their Dr. Friedrich had bandaged his wounds and cared for him, and though he had asked questions about the cuts and bruises that covered him from head to foot, he had not pressed for answers. That had come later, when Von Bruckner and Lieutenant Kohler had come to the room they had locked him in.

It hadn't been so bad, all in all, he decided. Dr. Friedrich had told him that afternoon what had happened to Tomha. Poor Tomha. Abbott had heard him screaming all morning. And when Kohler had given Abbott a duplicate of the beating he had given Tomha, it had been fruitless. It had

to be, once Abbott realized how anxious they were to find out what had happened in the jungle the night before. He could take more than that without talking. They had hanged Tomba and spared him. Why?

He looked up when the orderly offered him champagne.

"Take it, Mister!" Kohler shouted across the table in his thick, accented English. "Maybe you will need it later on!"

Abbott parted his bruised lips in a smile and took the glass. If ever he had the chance—and maybe he would make it—he would square things with Kohler. He remembered the cool grimness with which Kohler had beaten him with a belt buckle until he bled from a dozen places, until Dr. Friedrich had used up his capsules of ammonia, reviving him.

Whatever it was they were after, they had succeeded, he thought. Half of them were drunk. If only he spoke German, it would be easy to understand. The table in Devoli's dining room was piled high with food and drink. Von Bruckner and eight officers sat with Abbott and that girl at one table, and across the room was another table at which sat some fifteen non-commissioned officers. All wore full uniforms for the first time. He wondered about the three naval uniforms.

And what of the woman? Where did she fit in? She had started to come into his room once when the Doctor was dressing his wounds, and the Doctor had told her he didn't need her. She was extremely pretty. He saw her rising now, glass in hand, as Von Bruckner cried for a toast. He understood only one word of it. Hitler.

"On your feet!" Von Bruckner roared at him. "Get to your feet when you hear the name of the *Fuehrer*, you stupid cur!" he shouted, and he flung

a plate of food at him.

He stood up, brushing the food from his shirt. The Major repeated his toast and Abbott drank. He felt a little relieved when he saw that no one had noticed his fingers crossed, or had understood it. It was kid stuff, that finger-crossing, but it made him feel better. Still, he didn't want to get shot. The way they were feeling, it seemed a distinct possibility.

After the gruel and water he had had to eat that day, the food was wonderful. He ate quickly, not caring how he looked. Now and again he glanced toward the girl, but once, when their eyes met, she looked away disdainfully. To hell with her, Abbott thought. These Nazis certainly traveled well. Von Bruckner had brought his mistress with him. Chaumont, they called her, a French woman. Well, Paris had those, too.

HE WAS still eating when Captain Mayer unsteadily rose up, his clumsy sodden fingers unfolding a sheet of paper. The other officers roared and clamored for silence, and soon there was quiet, of a sort. Captain Mayer tried to hold the paper still and laughed at himself, but then he began reading. Abbott could make neither head nor tail of it, but whatever it said, it pleased the men tremendously. They shouted and howled in approval, and at its conclusion another toast followed, and Abbott had to cross his fingers again.

Only this time he saw that the woman had seen him. Momentarily, her cold forehead had wrinkled, her eyes fastened on his left hand, and when they traveled up to his eyes, Abbott saw that she understood. He waited for her to say something, but she didn't. What did happen was that Von Bruckner caught the way he was looking at her.

He not only caught it, but he said

something in German that made everyone laugh, and a quick, little blush spread over the girl's gay face. In a corner of the room, one of the non-commissioned officers made a gurgling, distressed sound, and as he was led out, the laughter grew louder. It was in the midst of this hilarity that Von Bruckner bammed his fist on the table for silence again.

"Herr Ahbott!" he cried, raising his glass, and everyone drank a toast to him, throwing their glasses against the wall. And when they all sat down, the expectancy plain on their faces, Abbott knew that it was coming now, whatever it was.

"Mr. Abbott," said Von Bruckner, "I don't suppose you know you're the guest of honor here tonight?" He was leaning far back in his chair, and when he tried to nudge Prinzler, next to him, he missed, and laughing, he kicked Prinzler under the table and Prinzler howled. "Answer me, Mr. Abbott! Did you know you were the guest of honor?"

"No."

"Well, then, don't you think you ought to know why you are?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll tell you!" the Major roared, kicking Prinzler again. "It is simply that you are the reason for our success! If I had not met you last night, Mr. Ahbott, we might have wasted months here, trying to win the confidence of your Dr. Devoli, hoping to pry out the secret of his gorillas. But you saved us, Mr. Abbott!"

It meant nothing to Abbott. It told him, vaguely, that he had been on the right track when he thought the Major had come there for some reason connected with the Whispering Gorilla. He knew nothing else; not even where Devoli was, though Dr. Friedrich had told him not to ask and not to worry.

"You see, Mr. Abbott, I had heard

about your little adventure in the Dakar yards, though I never suspected it was you when I met you. But when I found your friend Bradford in Tiola . . ."

Von Bruckner let his voice die away, waiting for its effect on Abbott. He was fully rewarded. Abbott felt the blood rushing to his head, felt his tongue grow thick. "You . . . found . . . Bradford?" he said.

"Yes!" Von Bruckner shouted, gleefully hammering his fist down. "Or rather," he amended, with a polite nod to the girl, "Miss Chaumont found him for us. Miss Chaumont, this lovely young lady on my right, is an old friend of the Third Reich. She followed your trail to Tiola, on the orders of the Dakar police, but in Tiola she found not you, but your friend Bradford. Last night when I returned to Tiola, Miss Chaumont led us to Bradford. Once we had him, realizing who he was, it was not too difficult to decide who you were, especially with your limp. . . ."

He reached out and patted the girl's hand affectionately. "That fortunate discovery convinced me that it was hopeless to proceed cautiously with a man who sheltered the Reich's enemies. It was a desperate move, Mr. Abbott, but it turned out to be a master stroke! For when you returned from the jungle last night with the Doctor, we quickly discovered the secret of his gorillas!"

His voice had risen to a triumphant pitch, his face aglow with pleasure and champagne. "You understand?" he said, leaning forward. "We know the secret of their obedience!"

Ahbott shook his head. It meant nothing to him. "Bradford," he breathed. "Where is he?"

Von Bruckner frowned. "Bradford is dead," he said, waving a hand impatiently. He kept regarding Abbott, and there was a tiny note of disappointment in his voice when he asked, "So you see



"... The real guest of honor!" said Abbott brokenly. The champagne splashed in the girl's face

why you are the guest of honor to-night?"

SLOWLY, Abbott had gotten to his feet. He stood there, brokenly, their faces swimming before him. The minute gleam of hope that had lived all day was snuffed out. It was over now. He picked up his glass and filled it, then raised the brimming glass.

"You're wrong, Major," he said. "The real guest of honor is Miss Chaumont." Then, slowly—because he had all the time in the world, because they could not anticipate him—Abbott whipped his hand across the table. The champagne flew out of it and splashed violently into the girl's face.

Over the instantaneous pandemonium, Von Bruckner's outraged voice bellowed, "*Beidermann—halt! Mayer! Kohler! Nein!*" He strode among them, tearing their hands from Abbott, letting him stand there, breathless and alone. His features were red as fire. "No," he said, jerking a hand for the officers to put away their guns. "Not so easy. The final triumph belongs to Miss Chaumont. She must have a prisoner to bring to Dakar—to be guillotined in the public square as an object lesson for the enemies of the new order." And as he spoke, he smashed Abbott across the face with an open hand, once, twice.

Abbott closed one eye and split in Von Bruckner's face. After that, all he remembered was a hand holding a bottle, coming at him. . . .

IT WAS very late that night when Abbott heard the noise at his window. He ignored it at first. The way his head felt, he had heard noises before. For hours he had been unable to sleep, sitting at his window, watching the moon come up and go down again. Finally, so tired that even the throbbing of his wounds could not keep him awake,

he had fallen asleep in his clothes, stretched across the bed. And now, hearing the noise, he discounted it also because he knew there was no way for anyone to get to the window; it was in the upper story of a blank wall.

But that, he suddenly told himself, had been altered that day when the wing had been added. It was possible. A sloping roof came down from the new wing to his end of the house.

And there was a noise, very slight, but definite. If he had doubted it, he had now seen a hand, prying the screen loose. While he had lain there, wearily debating it, his eyes had become accustomed to the luminous darkness. The hand had pried open the screen.

Cautiously, he rolled over and slid off the bed, coming down on the floor on all fours. What the hell it was, he had no idea, unless one of Von Bruckner's gallants had decided to have another go at him. He hoped it was Kohler. He had heard Kohler howling half the night.

A second hand came in, holding a long-barreled automatic, then a foot—but at this moment, just as Abbott was about to rise up and use his forearm as a loop—he saw that the foot belonged to a woman! It was the girl coming in! He straightened himself against the wall, at the instant she stood in the room, he looped his forearm around her throat, and with his other hand, twisted the gun from her. He held her firmly, expecting her to struggle, but she didn't.

He thought maybe he had broken her neck. He took his arm away quickly and she started to fall forward, then caught herself and spun around, holding her throat but pressing a hand over his mouth. Seeing that she was all right, he had been about to do the same thing to her, to stop her from making an outcry. Her action confused him.

She came up very close to him and whispered, "Be quiet! There's a sentry downstairs in the hall and there're more outside!"

She took her hand away and seemed to be listening intently, then she went to the door and listened there. Finally she came back to him and said, very softly, "I'm not one of these damned Nazis. I'm a French agent, but I'm a member of the underground, the Fighting French. You must believe me, I've no time to waste here."

Abbott felt the gun he had taken from her. He could barely make out its outlines; it was a German field pistol. "What do you want?"

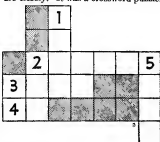
"Shh! Quietly! They're not all drunk." She held up a small, folded sheet of paper. "Alan Bradford gave me this. He told me to give it to you . . . when he knew he was dying." She put a hand over his mouth again, as if afraid of what he would say or do. "I followed your trail from Dakar to Tiola. In Tiola I found your friend. He had been brought there by a river caravan. That was three days ago, and he stayed hidden in a little inn at the outskirts of the town. He was dying and he knew it—he was afraid to try making it here or sending for you. . . ."

Abbott was silent. He kept looking at her.

"I stayed with him for three days," she went on, earnestly. "He knew who I was, what I had come for. I brought a doctor from Muerge, but nothing could be done for him. When I saw that he would not last the night, I surrendered him to the Nazis. I'll tell you why later. But your friend believed in me. He told me to give you this—he said it was the answer to the puzzle, that you would understand. . . ."

Abbott took the paper. If this was some trick—but he opened the paper,

peering at it in the darkness, making out the crudely drawn figure. Suddenly he felt a heavy, choking sensation. This was from Bradford—it could only have been he. He motioned the girl to stand where she was and went to a closet. There, shielding the match he lit, he examined the figure closely. It was a crossword puzzle.



1. What the *Telegram* sold.
2. (Across) Yardage equaling two first downs.
2. (Down) Last name of a famous dog.
3. Moola; Oats; Long green. (Syn.)
4. Dash the groove.
5. A hundred dollars.

HE BEGAN to fill the squares in hurriedly. It had been worked out simply, but in colloquialisms that would have been meaningless to the wrong people. Or was that what had happened? Was that why this girl had come to him this way—to hope he would solve it for them? He would deal with that later.

The first one was easy—*News*. The second . . . *Twenty* fitted in. The second one down—*Rin-Tin-Tin*, leaving *Tin*. The third, a synonym for moola, long green, composed of four letters, with *is* in the middle. *Fisk*—that was it! The fourth—dash the groove. It meant nothing. Unless dash meant to be filled in. In that

case—*In* the groove! And fifth, a *yard*, meaning a hundred dollars!

With the light of his last match he studied the completed puzzle. Then he read the words in the order he had written them: *News—Twenty—Tin—Fish—In—Yard*. Twenty tin fish! That meant . . . but it was impossible. Could the train in the Dakar railroad yard possibly have been transporting twenty submarines?

He returned to the girl. "If he trusted you, why didn't he give you the message directly, without resorting to this?"

Her voice was scarcely audible as she replied, "I wanted it that way. I didn't want to know anything that could be forced from me by torture . . . I still don't know what he wanted to tell you."

Abbott hesitated. The message itself was unimportant now. What did matter was this girl, and what she wanted. "But you must—" he said.

She gripped his arms tightly. "Please," she whispered fiercely. "If I must, I'll tell you everything, only let me tell you quickly. You must escape to Tiola before the Major misses me."

He could feel the tension in her hands, in the desperate urgency of her voice. "An hour after I surrendered your friend to the Nazis, he died. It was only last night that he told me you were here, and I immediately sent someone here to warn you. It was only after I had given Bradford up that I discovered Von Bruckner had been here, that his plans concerned this place. But you were not here to receive my warning, and there was nothing I could do. All I knew was that our underground had discovered Von Bruckner in Tiola, and Nazis everywhere, with great stores and equipment—and that they were up to something besides the possibility that they were

hunting you. When I realized that Bradford was dying, I decided to surrender him, hoping to win their favor. . . ."

Outside two men's voices exchanged greetings and passed on.

The girl said, quietly, "I am a beautiful woman. I would not hesitate to use any means. Fortunately, Von Bruckner sent for me this morning and brought me here. I tried to get to you during the day, but the Doctor stopped me. I did get to Dr. Devoli. He spoke to me, trying to explain something, and he gave me these."

She opened a handkerchief which contained three pale capsules. "He wanted me to give these to Bradford. He said Bradford would understand, that they were for Carpenter—"

"*Carpenter!*" Abbott breathed. "You're wrong . . . you must have misunderstood!"

"I'm not certain. He spoke from fever, mentioning many things. But he did tell me that this was a drug for the gorilla, that it would clear its mind if it became hard to manage. . . ."

"Yes," Abbott said, wonderingly, "the drug. . . . But why—"

"He must have anticipated what Von Bruckner was doing with the gorillas. I discovered it when I went to the field near here, where the officers were engaged. I didn't understand everything then, but I saw that they had taken the gorillas and taught them to operate a little machine that was shaped like a tiny submarine—"

"A submarine! Are you certain?"

"It could have been nothing else. The gorillas were intelligent enough to manage the submarine. They were being taught to follow and ram objects, as if they were hunting at sea. Von Bruckner and the others were beside themselves with joy—"

"Why do you say gorillas? Wasn't

there only one?"

"I saw only one, but I knew there were three altogether, and I heard them talking later, saying that all three had acted perfectly. This evening, before dinner, when they were already drunk, Von Bruckner sent a radio message to his superiors. That was what Captain Mayer read during dinner. It said that the task they had undertaken was already successful in all but the smallest details, and that they would be finished as soon as they had gathered up more operators. It was the word operators, in German, that made them laugh so. . . ."

"But it's impossible," said Ahbott, hopelessly confused.

She shook her head. "You must listen to me. I understand it as little as you, but there is no time to lose. Since last night, our underground has been gathering its forces in the vicinity. They must attack without delay—tomorrow night! There are a hundred men here, but they do not know the country. We are well armed. Take the pistol I brought you. I will pray for you. When you get to Tiola, go to . . ."

She stopped speaking, looking at him. "You do not believe me?"

OF COURSE he believed her. It was just that he hadn't yet come to understand what was happening. The facts were too many and too new for him to grasp all at once. Why had not Devoli told him the true story of the gorillas? Why had he kept it from him? And the drug . . . what had he expected Bradford to do with it? Why had he pinned his hope on Bradford? The story of the gorillas and the submarines was incredible, but the girl had seen it. And this message that Bradford had sent him, dying. . . . Bradford had known how important the

information was . . . the *twenty tin fish*. . . . Von Bruckner had known too, and he had planned a fantastic blow, and if it succeeded, the twenty tin fish would be only the beginning. . . .

"What about you?" said Ahbott.

"I must stay here. I must see what they do tomorrow. After you go, I will return to his room. . . ." She paused, touching his hand. "It is not as bad as that. He was very drunk when he took me upstairs. He fell asleep immediately. He is quite harmless, believe me."

Ahbott said: "You'll come with me."

She said, softly, "I would only be in your way. You must travel fast, alone. Try to understand. Nothing matters; not our lives and desires, only victory."

"You're right," Ahbott said, slowly. "But if you stay, he mustn't know you were mixed up in this." In the darkness, he looked into her eyes. He pressed the gun into her unwilling fingers. "Return this. . . . I'll find another way to get out of here."

"There are sentries everywhere. One is downstairs, another on the veranda, a third before the house. . . ." She held his hand tightly. "You'll jeopardize everything unless you accept my help."

After a moment, Ahbott nodded. He fumbled in his pockets until he found a new book of matches. He rolled the paper with the puzzle on it to a taper. "I don't want you to carry those capsules with you," he said. "No evidence, understand?" He went back to the closet, closing it, and lit the taper.

While it was burning, the girl came to him. "I forgot to tell you about this," she said. "Perhaps it ought to be burned, too." She held out a small photograph of a dark-haired woman. "Bradford gave it to me to give to Dr. Devoli."

Abbott held the photograph in a hand he found difficult to keep steady. His eyes misted. "Poor Roselle," he murmured, and to Jeanne he said, quietly, "This is Roselle Carpenter. Once she was the wife of a friend of Alan's and Devoli . . . the Carpenter that Devoli mentioned. . . ."

"Bradford loved her," she said. "The last words he spoke were of her. I thought she was his wife."

"She was Carpenter's wife. There never was another man for her. She never forgot him. Alan knew that, and he understood, but he couldn't help loving her. . . ." He shook his head, as if to clear it. "No," he said. "I can't burn her picture. Hide it somewhere. Devoli will want it." He smiled grimly at her. "When we're out of this," he said.

He closed the closet and led her back to the window. He took the sheet from his bed and tore off a long strip. "You're in this house, aren't you? Good. We've got to have one of the staircases unguarded for a minute. When you get back to the Major's room, go out into the hall and call the sentry downstairs. Tell him to bring you a pitcher of water. That's all."

"But what will you do?"

"Don't worry about it. Now tell me what I have to do in Tiola."

A minute later, when she had finished speaking, Abbott took her hand and kissed it. "For the champagne," he whispered.

She reached up and drew his face down to hers. Her lips were soft and cool, and when Abbott pressed her to him, he felt her tremble. "For your courage," she breathed.

He lifted her to the sill. He peered out into the darkness. No sound came from below; no one was in sight. She climbed out on the roof. He gave her the pistol, and then she was gone.

HE WAITED a few minutes, then opened the door that led to the hall. He stuck his head out and looked down the open stairway and quickly ducked back. A uniformed soldier was sitting in a chair, facing the stairway. Listening carefully, he heard Jeanne's voice, faintly, then footsteps. When he looked out again, the Nazi was gone from the chair, but the next minute he saw him coming back from the other stairway, crossing the living room to the kitchen.

Swiftly, Abbott descended on tip-toe. Reaching the living room, he heard the sound of water running in the kitchen. He crouched and went to the second stairway, hiding behind a high-backed wicker chair. From a table he took the smallest of several ash-trays. He put the ash-tray into the center of the strip of linen he had taken with him, and wound it securely in place, so that he had a slender, spiralled piece of cloth, weighted by the ash-tray.

A moment later, the water stopped and the soldier came out of the kitchen carrying a pitcher of water. He crossed the room and started up the stairway. He was on the second stair when Abbott came out from behind the chair. With a quick, dexterous motion, he looped the linen string around the soldier's neck, so that the covered ash-tray smashed squarely against the Nazi's larynx as Abbott yanked the string. The entire action took a fraction of an instant.

The Nazi's body jerked erect. The faintest gurgle came from his shattered throat, and as he brought his hands up, Abbott stuck his hand into the pitcher. The water spilled out, but the pitcher stayed on his left hand. His right hand spun the loop tighter and tighter. For a moment the two men stood thus, neither moving, Abbott half crouched over to support the sol-

dier's weight as his body sagged more and more against Abbott, until finally the soldier's arms fell to his sides and were still.

Abbott bent down, using his body as a lever to lower the Nazi's inert form to the floor. He put the pitcher down quietly and disengaged the string from the soldier's throat. The soldier's bulging eyes were wide open, and through his parted lips a trickle of blood ran down his chin and over his uniform. He was dead, his larynx crushed and hemorrhaging; he had probably never realized what hit him.

Abbott took out the broad, triangular trench knife from the dead soldier's belt sheath. He cautiously dragged the body under a table, then put the ash-tray back. He got up and sneaked along the wall to the door. From here the wall was all screen, starting four feet from the floor and going to the ceiling. If anything happened before the screen, it would be visible to anyone outside.

He lifted a chair and placed it to the left of the door, so that it was hidden from view by the closed wall. He stuck the trench knife into the floor a foot away from the chair, then he unlooped the linen string to its full length. On all fours he crept to the screened door and peered out. The sentry was standing at the far end of the veranda, leaning against one of the posts and smoking. No one else was in sight.

ABBOTT crawled back and got between the wall and the chair, and when he crouched down, the trench knife was inches from his reach. Then he called softly. "Pssst!" He waited, repeated the insistent sound. He heard the quick footsteps on the veranda.

They stopped outside the door. Evidently the soldier was looking in. "Karl!" he called, quietly. "Karl, wo

bist du?" The next moment he opened the door and started into the room.

Abbott moved the instant the door closed. He rose up, looped the string over the soldier's throat. Simultaneously he yanked the string and brought his knee up viciously into the soldier's back. The soldier's feet flew out from under him, and twisting, his hands clawing at the string, he fell backward into the waiting chair. He bounced up, and in that moment Abbott's hand flashed up from the floor. The trench knife traveled three feet through the air and sank into the soldier's ribs, piercing his heart.

Abbott had to pull hard to get the knife out. He avoided looking at the dead soldier's face. A wave of nausea seized him when he saw the red, gleaming stain on the knife, but he grinned bitterly and wiped it off on the soldier's trousers. He pulled the chair farther back and rested a moment, getting his breath.

His leg burned and ached, and there was a dull, hollow ache in his chest that made it difficult for him to breathe. He had been lucky so far. The beating had left him enough strength to accomplish the first part of his plans. He looked at the large, holstered revolver that lay quietly against the dead man's thigh. He was at home with a gun, Abbott thought. If he dared to use it, dared making a sound, he could have shot his way out. But suddenly he took the gun and stuck it into his belt. Perhaps later, when he—

Voices! They were perhaps thirty or forty yards away, one of them loud, noisy, the other subdued. An officer talking to one of the sentries. Perhaps he was making the rounds, a tour of inspection. He had to be quick now, whatever he did.

He got up and opened the door, then walked down the length of the veranda,

making no effort to hide or be quiet, and when he reached the veranda stairs he sat down on the top stair, one hand across his lap, the knife under it. He could see the dim outlines of the two men's forms silhouetted against a glow that came from one of the barns. The voices stopped and the men exchanged salutes. Undoubtedly both had heard him walking across the veranda, Abbott knew, and they had seen him—but not *him*—for they had looked, if they had looked at all, with the eyes of habit, with eyes that expected a sentry to be there. The attempt to sneak along the veranda might have been a fatal error; the slightest covert action or sound would have screamed to them.

THE sentry started walking away, his rifle over his shoulder, and the other came towards the house. Abbott tensed, sat waiting, his head slightly bowed, and well below the threshold of light. Closer and closer the steps came, and when they passed the rectangle of light that fell from the door, spilling across the veranda and the path, Abbott looked up and saw that it was indeed an officer who approached. And he saw more than that—for the officer was Lieutenant Kohler! A thrill raced through him. His hand was icy cool as it closed on the trench knife.

Kohler was five feet away when his step faltered. The area of light through which he had passed had momentarily unconditioned his eyes to the darkness. He must have seen enough to know that whoever it was that sat there, it was not the sentry, but his pace carried him another foot or two before he stopped.

"Was tut mann—"

He had started to speak when Abbott got up and with a single bound was on him. The words froze in his mouth.

He seemed unable to move a step, but his body leaned away from Abbott, and one of his hands came up slowly, already too late to stop the thrust that had hit him and gone. The hand kept going up slowly, touching the throat that had been slashed from ear to ear, feeling the blood that spurted. Then, as the hand fell away, Kohler's body sagged. His knees bent gently and he fell face down on the path.

Abbott pulled him to the side of the house. He hid there, waiting. In the barn he heard voices. The sentry was nowhere in sight. He squatted, thinking. Then he got up and staying close to the house, he skirted the wall until he reached its end. Leaving the path, he raced across the grass to the newly-built shed. Under its cover he crept to the next building. He listened, swiftly crossed an open patch and was at the back wall of the barn.

He searched the grass for a sliver of light, then, tracing it to a space between timbers, he looked through it into the barn. There were two soldiers sitting inside, stripped to the waist, sitting on oil drums and working over a small section of machinery. Two large searchlights had been trained on their makeshift table, and the barn was well lighted. To one side of them, near the stalls, were some fifteen motorcycles, several of which had attached sidecars. The soldiers spoke to each other occasionally, evidently about their work.

As he watched, Abbott saw the door swing open and the sentry come in. One of the soldiers asked a question. The sentry scowled his answer and both soldiers laughed. The sentry put his rifle down and took out a cigarette. One of the soldiers got up and knocked the match from his hand, pointing to the oil drums and berating him. The sentry said something in answer and the soldier shook his head, motioning outside.

Abbott started swinging around the walls, heading for the barn door. Time was running short. It was now almost five minutes since he had killed the first man. He had no idea of their arrangements; at any moment his victims might be discovered. He had to move fast, but above all, cautiously. And though he could kill easily, he was sick of blood.

He reached the corner just as the door opened and the sentry came out, then, without waiting, he started towards him, staying close to the wall, moving soundlessly. What had been partially true for Kohler was entirely true for the sentry—coming from the well lit barn, his eyes would be useless for a moment in the dark. It was the assimilated knowledge of little things like this that made a successful killer, Abbott thought grimly.

HE WAS almost face to face with the motionless sentry when he took a hard hold of his gun. He fixed a finger in the trigger guard and held the hard wood—stock out. He moved suddenly, his arm coming down with the gun on the sentry's head. His other arm circled the sentry's body, catching him and the rifle. He laid them both down gently to one side of the closed door.

There was a decision to be made: should he walk in on the two men in the barn, using the gun for authority? It would be faster. But they might decide that their lives were forfeit if they let him escape, and they might do anything. He bent down and took off the soldier's coat, putting his hand into the left sleeve. Then he took a cigarette, struck a match in cupped hands and lit it.

Holding the gun in his right hand, he stood with his back against the barn door. With his left hand he opened the

door slightly, then held it past the end of the door, so that it would be visible inside. He held the lighted cigarette in that hand and he wagged his fingers in a come-here signal, being careful to keep his fingers loose, so that the motion should not appear too urgent. Otherwise, he knew, he would get both soldiers out together.

One of the soldiers called: "*Ako, was ist los jetzt?*"

Abbott repeated the motion.

"*Zum teufel!*" said the soldier, getting up. He came through the door and Abbott leaned against it, closing it behind him gently. The next moment he smashed the gun down. When he pulled the unconscious soldier away, he let the barn door swing open a trifle by itself. He waited a moment, and presently the remaining soldier called, "Paul!" No answer. "Paul!" Sharper now. Seven or eight steps. The barn door opening quickly. . . .

He was feverishly anxious now to get going, but he forced himself to take the time to undress the tallest of the soldiers. Hurriedly he put the trousers over his own, buttoned the tunic, squeezed his feet into the boots. Then he strapped the sentry's rifle to his back and went into the barn. He examined the nearest motorcycle carefully, opening its fuel tank to make certain it was filled. Its mechanism, he saw, scarcely differed from British motorcycles he had used.

From one of the walls he took down a tropical pith helmet and donned it, then slung two message pouches over his shoulders. He stuck a hand into a pool of oil and lightly touched his face with it. At the last minute he remembered, and went back to the hanging tunics, rifling them and taking out some letters which he held in his hand. He had seen too much of the German thoroughness to believe he was away yet.

He took the first motorcycle and wheeled it out of the barn. Then, still rolling it, he went for some fifty yards before, with one quick motion, he stood on the starter and got the motor going. He took the road to Tiola.

A moment after his motor had shattered the night quiet with its hammering cough, two searchlights down the road switched on, and standing in its light were three soldiers. They trained the light on him as he swept past them. They shouted at him, and he waved the papers in his hand and shouted back. "*Zum teufel!*" he yelled, wondering if it was appropriate. It sounded good.

Two hundred yards farther down, more lights caught him, and he had to swerve to avoid hitting the men. It happened once more, but each time the papers and his refusal to stop carried him through. Each time there had been rifles held in readiness; at the second post an officer had waved a pistol.

But he was through. The light of the motorcycle stabbed the road before him as he roared through darkness, going like hell.

CHAPTER VII

BY NINE o'clock, Major Von Bruckner had finished his inquiry. He hardly touched his breakfast, notwithstanding the real coffee that had been brewed. His face was a mask of quiescent fury. Now and then he touched his head and his eyes closed in pain; he had already taken four aspirins, but there was no relief.

He had blundered that morning, badly, stupidly, perhaps irrevocably. Beidermann would not forget, he was certain; Beidermann had been Kohler's closest friend. He glanced up at the somber faces of the officers who sat with him, watching their taut, nervous movements, listening to their quiet,

sparse conversation — conversation which they forced on themselves, as if all feared an otherwise inevitable silence.

He had shocked them. He had wheeled on Beidermann, furious in his refusal to attend the burial ceremonies for Kohler and the two dead soldiers. "If he were alive," Von Bruckner had cried, shaking with rage, "I would have had him shot on the spot!"

It had been a violation of the officer's code. Kohler had died doing his duty, officer in charge of the camp guard. . . .

He remembered how he had been awakened. The dawn edging into his room, the pounding on the door. He tumbled out of bed, bleary-eyed, his head hammering with pain, and when he opened the door, Captain Mayer had started to tell him, and then, looking past him, he had seen the girl, who was still in the room. Von Bruckner had forgotten about her. He had been asleep. But Mayer saw her, and he fumbled the words he spoke.

And then he had slammed the door shut, dressing quickly, saying nothing to the awakened girl. When he went downstairs he saw the two dead soldiers. Outside, still untouched, the horrible sight of Kohler's sprawled corpse, lying in mud that had been formed with his blood. . . .

They had reconstructed what had happened, for the most part. The torn bedsheet in the American's room, the missing trench knife, later found in the barn, the stolen pistol, the uniform, motorcycle . . . the way he had outwitted the camp guard posts . . . yes, theoretically, they could trace the bloody path on which Abbott had traveled. The man was a demon, a fiend, a monster. But if Kohler had been. . . .

And that too had been a mistake, his enraged statement that Kohler had been guilty of crass neglect of duty.

He should have known better than to have said that, after what Mayer had seen—or thought he had seen. Mayer had undoubtedly told the others, and though he was wrong, there was nothing that he, Von Bruckner, could do about it.

THE best thing was to forget it.

They would be here for some time yet, and there would be time enough to demonstrate, subtly, that he realized he had been wrong. Perhaps next week he would order the graves decorated, and recommend Kohler for posthumous promotion and honors. Meanwhile, there was work to be done. Things were going wonderfully well. Regarded in the proper perspective, Abbott's escape was a painful, but minor, thorn. And he might very well be caught. Two patrols were scouring the countryside for him. . . .

"Leutnant Faber," said Von Bruckner, "we will postpone our plans for gathering several new gorillas until this afternoon, since the cages will not be ready before then, and—"

"I must apologize, sir," said Beidermann, stiffly. "The delay—"

"Quite understandable, Captain. No apology is necessary. Still, while you are at it, it might be wise to spread your materials and make provision for thirty animals."

"That would weaken the cages, sir. We have enough steel for some ten animals, though more will be in within the week."

"I don't think they need be quite that strong, Captain. All three gorillas were very quiet last night, and while we still do not know whether they broke out the night we found the hole under their shack, it appears they have not attempted it. It seems to me that it would be better to use what we have now to train the largest number we can

accommodate. Do you agree?"

"Whatever you say, sir."

"Good. And you, Faber, can spend the morning with the three we have now. Do you intend to try teaching them the torpedo mechanism?"

"I'm not sure, sir. Leutnant Prinzler said they were behaving queerly when they were fed this morning. Perhaps—"

"I will be glad to come along if you don't think you can handle the animals yourself."

"No, sir," said Faber. "I'm sure I can handle them."

"Very well, then," said Von Bruckner, rising. "I'll see you later." He started up the stairs to his room, glancing to the veranda, where Jeanne sat. He had not spoken to her all morning; he had been a fool with her too. But sleep would settle everything. The damnable headache would be gone with a little sleep, and the rage he still felt gnawing at his vitals would be not quite so sharp. . . .

VON Bruckner sat up in bed suddenly, hearing the shooting. He ran to the window and saw nothing. The shooting was coming from the other direction, near the sheds. Now it stopped, and everything was quiet. He glanced at his watch, dressing quickly. He had been asleep three hours; it was now past noon.

He went down the stairs and met Prinzler coming to get him.

"What happened?"

"One of the gorillas, Major—Leutnant Diemler had to shoot it when it attacked Faber!"

The Major brushed by him and ran outside, hurrying down the path toward the house where a score of soldiers had gathered. He saw the truck used to transport the gorillas standing near the shed. Faber was leaning against it,

holding one of his arms, supported by a soldier.

Von Bruckner walked into the center of the circle. At his feet lay one of the gorillas, the one that wore the brassard numbered 2 on one of its arms. It was quite dead. It had been shot at least six times and a huge pool of blood was running swiftly from underneath its body. Its jaw had been half shot off, and the bullets of the .45 automatic had penetrated its body, tearing holes in the flesh of its back.

"Leutnant Faber, what happened here?" Von Bruckner cried.

Faber's face was ghastly white. He bit his lips, as if to hold on to himself. He looked as if he were about to fall, but he stood there, unable to speak, gulping in mouthfuls of air. At this moment, Dr. Friedrich came hurrying up, Diemler, one of the three naval officers, carrying his bag.

The Doctor took Faber's hand away. A deep, jagged wound lay open for six inches along the arm, dark and discolored, embedded with shreds of cloth from the sleeve, which had been ripped so violently that its seams had parted at the shoulder. There was hardly any bleeding. At a word from Friedrich, Prinzler and Diemler took hold of Faber under the arms and began half-carrying him to the main house.

"Not you, Diemler," said the Major. "I want you here." Out of courtesy alone, for he could hardly speak, the way he felt, the Major said to Faber, "You'll be all right, Faber. I'll be with you shortly."

A glance from Von Bruckner had sent the soldiers scurrying. Now the Major examined the locks on the house, seeing that they had been snapped shut. He walked around to the barred window and looked in. One of the gorillas, wearing the number 3 brassard, was sitting quietly in a corner, looking at

the floor. The other, with number 1 on its arm, was standing crouched over in the center of the floor, as if it had been pacing until this very moment and had stopped when it heard the Major at the window. A moment later it bounded across the floor and stuck a hand through the bars, narrowly missing its grab at Von Bruckner, who had jumped back.

THERE was a sound from inside, and the gorilla withdrew its arm. It gripped the bars and shook them until the timbers of the house shivered, its mouth open and fangs exposed, then abruptly it was gone.

Von Bruckner shook his head. He started back to the house.

"Leutnant Diemler, tell me what happened here. Everything."

"We came back here, Faber and I, to bring back the first gorilla and get another. The first had been completely useless—"

"Useless? How do you mean?"

"Entirely, sir. That was the number 3 one. When we opened the door, it came out of its own accord and went into the truck. After that it did nothing Faber ordered. It seemed to be in bad temper, though it moved very sluggishly. We took it to the field, and it was half an hour before it would get out of the truck. We brought it some raw meat, but it didn't seem to be hungry. It climbed one of the trees in the grove and stayed there until Faber sent for a saw—then, astonishingly enough, it came down, as if it understood, though of course Faber spoke German."

"Go on."

"It was useless, sir. It refused to heed a single order. It just stood or sat, as it pleased, looking at us and doing nothing. After an hour it finally got into the machine, started it, ran it

aimlessly for perhaps two or three minutes, then came out. It took us almost another hour to get it back to the truck.

"We decided to try another one, thinking the first one might have been ill. When we got back, Faber kept the gorilla from shutting the door on him. He told me that yesterday, each time he brought back one of the gorillas, it closed the door behind it, as if it had to hide something. He wanted to find out what it means, so when he opened the door he slipped a board through the back space. . . ."

"You're quite sure about this door closing business, Diemler?"

"Yes, sir. Faber will tell you, sir. He kept the door open. I was right behind him. When the number 3 gorilla went in, it tried to close the door but couldn't. Then it seemed to make some sort of sound to the other gorillas, and when Faber pointed to the number 2 gorilla and told it to come out, it came quickly.

"But the moment I closed the locks, it seemed to go berserk. The first thing I heard, turning toward the truck, was a deep, snarling sound from the gorilla. Faber backed away from it and it leaped on him, clutching at the arm he pushed into its face. But for that arm, separating him from the gorilla, I might not have dared shoot. As it was, I ran in a step and fired point-blank. Then I went for the Doctor."

They had reached the house. Von Bruckner was lost in thought, his face inscrutable, his movements slow and absent-minded. He mounted the veranda silently and looked in. Friedrich was testing a hypodermic syringe, standing close to Faber. In spite of himself, Von Bruckner's mouth stretched thin and hard. He turned to Diemler: "I want Captains Mayer and Beidermann here, immediately."

BEIDERMANN came first, wearing an open shirt and a soiled field cap, covered with sweat. "Captain Beidermann," said Von Bruckner, "one of the gorillas attacked Faber a short while ago and had to be killed. Under the circumstances, you had better return to the original plan."

"I'm half through now, sir. If I have to start again, I can't hope to have them ready before nightfall."

Von Bruckner nodded and looked away, signifying that Beidermann was free to go. When Mayer came, the Major saw that he had been told what had happened. "Mayer, I want you to radio Tripoli or Dakar and have six bloodhounds flown here at once. By tonight, if possible. And specialists to take care of them. Mention Von Zweig if you have any trouble."

"Bloodhounds, sir?"

The Major almost shouted at Mayer. But no, not Mayer. Of all the officers, Mayer had been closest to him. He wanted . . . needed . . . someone to talk to. . . .

"Yes, Mayer. I don't know what the American did here last night before he escaped. You remember what Benno, Devoli's houseboy, told us about the drugs Devoli gave the gorilla? Maybe the American knew of other drugs. Maybe he gave some to the gorillas—I don't know. At any rate, in the event that our American returns, and he is fiend enough to try, I don't want to lose him—and I'm not sure our guards are a match for him. So we'll use dogs to trail a dog."

"Yes, sir," said Mayer. "As a matter of fact, I was about to see you. Ten minutes ago we started receiving a radio call from Dakar. It was in the urgent 33Y code. It said 'By special order of Marshall Von Zweig and Admiral Eberhardt' and stopped there. A few minutes later, Dakar said the mes-

sage would be sent within the hour."

"Thank you, Mayer. Be sure to call me."

He watched Mayer walk away. Strange, he thought. Had that ass Gleichenhau made trouble so soon? But why should Von Zweig be in it—and what, in the devil's name, was Eherhardt's name doing in the message? An answer to his own message of last night—the excellent news? Congratulations, perhaps? It could be quite awkward, such a thing, at this time. What had Diemler omitted in his story? Diemler, loyally standing by that insufferable bungler, Faber. Navy officers standing together against the army—that kind of rot.

Near the sheds, Prinzler was leading a squad of men, carrying away the dead gorilla. Blood, nothing but blood since Abbott had escaped. Like a curse on the place. The thought made his skin crawl. He was filled with a strange sense of foreboding. . . .

He got up suddenly and went inside. Friedrich was alone, gathering up his instruments. He had sent Faber to bed, to get some rest.

"Doctor, how is Devoli?" He was surprised at the uneven pitch of his voice.

"Better, *Herr* Major. He was able to eat this morning."

"I want to talk with him."

Dr. Friedrich hesitated, his eyes on his instruments. He said, quietly, apologetically, "May I ask if what you intend to say is liable to . . . to excite him?"

"Perhaps."

"I cannot be responsible." The Doctor shook his head. "In a few days, perhaps, after he has regained his strength. . . ."

Von Bruckner was about to say something, but at the last moment he turned on his heel and went out. He

walked down the road for half a mile, twice passing soldiers without returning their salute. When he returned, his staff had almost finished their lunch. He excused them from waiting for him, but to naval Lieutenants Diemler and Braun, he said, laconically, "We will resume work with the gorillas in half an hour."

FOR most of the ensuing half hour, Von Bruckner sat at the table, thinking. He was unable to eat. He sipped black coffee and smoked a long cigar. Once he looked outside, hearing Jeanne Chaumont's voice, and his eyes followed her until she was out of sight, and then, to himself, he shook his head, and his scowl deepened. . . .

Braun and Diemler were waiting for him when Von Bruckner went outside. He noticed that both officers had their sidearms lying in holsters on a table near them, as if waiting for the Major's permission to wear them. The Major nodded towards the guns. "You may need them, gentlemen," he said. "In addition, I want six men about the house, with rifles."

He went to the shack that housed the gorillas and looked in at the window. Nothing had changed. The number 3 gorilla was still sitting, hunched over; the other was pacing, only this time, seeing the Major at the window, it stopped and stared at him, making no move. He went around to the front and put a key in the lock, listening carefully as he did so. There was no sound from within, but when he rattled the lock noisily, he heard a soft grunting that seemed to come from near the door, where the sitting gorilla was.

In a few minutes, Braun returned with a sergeant and half a squad. They formed a semi-circle around the door, standing twenty feet away. Von Bruckner, un-armed, opened the first lock,

then the second. He pushed the door open with a foot.

The eyes of both animals were on him. He let his breath in and out slowly, then, raising a hand, he pointed to the number 1 gorilla. "Come out," he said, his voice strong and even. Nothing happened for a moment, and then the squatting gorilla rose from its haunches. "Not you!" Von Bruckner said distinctly. "I want the—"

Later, Von Bruckner was not sure he had heard anything. Things happened too quickly for him to be able to separate the swift movements; it might easily have been the trick of an overwrought imagination. The number 3 gorilla, coming towards him, had stopped uncertainly, and from its half open mouth a solitary sound had come—a sound that might have been the word *if*. Whatever it was, it was never finished, for at that moment the other gorilla swung its shoulders forward and left its feet in its leap at Von Bruckner!

In the same instant the Major stepped back and out. He curled around, his back against the outside wall, then let himself fall sideways to the base of the wall. The movement had taken him beyond the reach of the gorilla and then freed the area for the riflemen, though the manoeuvre baffled them for a fraction of an instant. In that time, the gorilla, rushing forward, either because it had lost sight of the Major or because it ignored him, had covered half the distance to the nearest soldier, a horrible, throaty cry trailing behind it.

A fusillade of shots cracked out. The gorilla stopped in its forward motion as if it had run into a wall. Its voice stopped quite suddenly and it pitched backward on its spine. It lay there, flailing an arm, grasping the air, until Braun stepped in and emptied his pistol in its brain.

BY THEN Von Bruckner was on his feet again. He reached the open door together with Diemler. The Leutnant had been about to slam the door shut, but the Major caught his hand. He looked in and saw the last of the three gorillas as it stood there, motionless as a tree, its head inclined, its eyes on the scene that lay behind the Major.

"Leave the door open!" Von Bruckner cried. He walked up to where the dead gorilla lay. "Take it away," he said to Braun, quietly. "We are going to try the other one."

But he couldn't disguise the unsteadiness of his hand when he took the cigarette Diemler offered him. He stood there, clotted dirt clinging to the perspiration that soaked him, smoking quickly and watching the soldiers drag off the dead gorilla. After a few moments, as if he had lost track of time, he thanked Diemler for the cigarette.

"Major Von Bruckner, perhaps . . . perhaps it would be advisable to wait before doing anything else."

The Major said nothing, and Diemler said, "For Dr. Devoli, I mean, sir. There must be something about these animals we do not know."

Von Bruckner shook his head slowly. Long, brittle lines furrowed his forehead. He turned the cigarette in his hand, regarding it, and when he spoke his voice had the soft, rigidly controlled note of near panic in it. "Yes, Diemler, of course," he said, as if the reasonableness of his words was a drug to soothe him. "But you see, whatever it is, we do not know—whatever it is, we must find it for ourselves. We must know exactly. . . ."

But it was no use. His voice died away, and he knew he had made no sense. The panic was growing within him.

"Diemler, get the men ready."

The door to the little shack had been left open all this time. Now, as the soldiers assumed their positions, Von Bruckner started walking toward the open door.

"Major Von Bruckner!"

The Major stopped and turned around, and his breath escaped in a sigh, as if he had been reprieved from an obligation he feared. It was Captain Mayer who had called him. The Captain came hurrying.

"Major, this is of the utmost importance."

He handed Von Bruckner a sealed, red-striped envelope. The Major opened it and saw the heading: *Strictly Confidential: Code 33Y.*

The words swam before him, little ciphers struggling in a sea of paper. He read them a second time, a third.

"By special order of Marshal Von Zweig and Admiral Eherhardt: News magnificent. Time now of utmost importance. Assign staff to clear details, while proceeding immediately to Dakar with ten of the trained operators. Plane on the way to you. Congratulations."

Von Bruckner held his hand up to his eyes, and when he looked up they were wide and fixed. "Did you acknowledge this?" he breathed.

"Of course, sir. At once."

The Major nodded to himself. "Of course," he whispered. It was inconceivable. They wanted him to bring ten trained gorillas to Dakar. Something very important. He knew that. Ten . . . when he had one, and that one completely . . . It was imperative for him to get a grip on himself, to work out the answer, to tell Von Zweig. . . .

"Mayer!" he cried, sharply. "The message we sent last night—what did it say?"

"I have a copy right here, sir. I'll

read it. *Mission successful beyond all expectations. Operators on hand already fully capable in all but smallest details. Others expected to equal these. Will remain here long enough to establish routine, then—"*

"Stop, Mayer." He took the paper and crumpled it with a savage move. "I'll . . ." he began to say, when he started suddenly toward the door of the little shack.

HE TOOK no more than three or four steps, then clutched at his stomach. The blood on the ground . . . the blood, its horrible, nauseating odor . . . it was on his boots . . . it was everywhere . . . it rose from the ground, from the stained, muddy rivulets in invisible waves, choking him . . .

He turned around and began to retch. As the officers came toward him he waved them away. He walked back to the truck and sat down on its running board, cleaning his face with a handkerchief. "Mayer," he said. "Wire Dakar. Tell them . . ." But he looked into Mayer's face and he saw what he was doing.

No, there was nothing he could wire Dakar now. He had gone too far. He could not ask for time. He could not confess even temporary failure; there were no failures in the army of the Third Reich. . . .

He heard the noise as if from a distance, the staccato bursts of the car's exhaust, the men's voices. A car came speeding through the huge, billowing clouds of its dust. It stopped before the main house and men leaped out, like grey-brown figures in a dusty dream, supporting another soldier. Leutnant Keller, who was with them, dashed into the house. A moment afterward he came out, running towards Von Bruckner, calling the others.

"Major Von Bruckner—both our

our patrols have been ambushed—"

It was the way Von Bruckner looked at him, a hard, wild look, that stopped Keller. The Major slowly rose to his feet. "What are you saying, Keller?"

"The American is in Tiola with a large force of French! Both the patrols we sent after him were annihilated! Only this man escaped."

They had brought the soldier to Von Bruckner by then. He was a disheveled, weary young boy, perhaps twenty years old. There was a long, ugly wound on one side of his head. His uniform hung on his exhausted frame in bloody, filthy tatters.

"Ambushed, sir," he breathed. "A hundred and fifty of them . . . armed with rifles . . . coming here tonight to attack . . ."

Von Bruckner, motionless, impassive, heard the story. The first patrol had gone through Tiola; the second had been contacted by a spy and told that Abbott was hiding near Tiola, gathering the Free French. But the spy had not known how far the preparations had gone . . .

He heard it all before he spoke—the encircling of the camp, the ambush from both sides of a deep ravine; they had shot the tires of the soldier's motorcycle and it had thrown him down an embankment. And the charge of the French, refusing to take prisoners, killing everything. And the arrival of the second patrol before it could be warned, the fierce, hopeless, outnumbered struggle.

When he was through, Von Bruckner said, quietly, "Do they know you escaped?"

"No, sir. I lay hidden for hours . . . they searched everywhere for survivors, killing those they found . . . they were afraid you might learn of their plans to attack tonight . . ."

The Major took a deep breath, and

then he did an unusual thing for him. He shook the soldier's hand warmly and thanked him more with the slight inclination of his head than with words, and then, turning sharply to Mayer and the other officers, he motioned them to follow him a few feet away.

"Captain Mayer, wire Dakar. Inform them we are momentarily expecting an assault in force and cannot undertake to carry out the orders just sent us. Tell them we are greatly outnumbered and require assistance and heavy arms. Braun, call a staff meeting in fifteen minutes. Dlemmer, post every available man on guard duty and pass out full allotments of ammunition."

He took a few steps toward the house, when suddenly he stopped, returning to the shack. The door was still open, the soldiers still on guard. The Major looked in at the gorilla. It was sitting on its haunches in a corner, its eyes fixed on the square rectangle of light that was the door. For a long, still moment Von Bruckner regarded the animal, then he closed the door.

"Keller," he said, to the waiting officer, "have you seen *fräulein* Chaumont?"

"No, sir."

"Find her and confine her to her room. I hold you responsible."

LATER, at the staff meeting, Von Bruckner made his plans. He went over the gun emplacements that Beidermann had laid out, the provisions for supply, the concentration of men.

"By six o'clock," said Mayer, "three transports with parachute troops will land—"

"No, Mayer," he said, quietly. "I believe Captain Beidermann has other plans." By way of explanation, almost, he added, "Beidermann is our tactical expert, as you know; I believe it

will be wisest to put the battle plan in his hands."

Beidermann, nodding, said: "The first planes, transporting the material, will be here by five, I believe? Well, then, Prinzler will go back with one of the planes to Rhamtoola, where he will meet the commanding officer of the parachutists. There, Prinzler, you will see to it that the officers and pilots are well acquainted with the terrain and our emplacements, also our signals. The planes are to leave Dakar in time to be here at nine o'clock—it will not be dark until then—but they are not to come here.

"They are to take full gasoline rations—you will so notify Dakar, Mayer?—and they will hover some fifty miles from here, due south, over the jungle, about here . . ." He pointed to an area on the large map stretched before them. "We will be in close radio communication with them. At our command, they will proceed here, dropping their men according to pre-arranged signals. Understood?"

They went on, planning the patrol activity, arranging for scouts and spies, location of mines, deploying of emergency squads. Now that they were planning combat, their spirits were higher. None mentioned the thoughts that lay buried deep within them, the confusion and wonder at what had happened to the main plan that had brought them all here, but Von Bruckner could not keep the thoughts from his mind.

Over and over he mulled the fragmentary facts he had gathered, trying to fit them together. The battle would go well, he knew; his men were well fitted for their jobs, specialists all. But what would follow? After this momentary respite, what would he do about following the orders Von Zweig had sent? Because from the subsequent—

"What about the Chaumont girl?"

Keller interrupted. "Am I to assume she is under arrest, sir?"

Keller's remark was news to the officers; none had known of Von Bruckner's order. The Major nodded. He had been thinking of her, in the back of his mind, at the moment Keller spoke.

"Yes," said Von Bruckner. "I am convinced that she had a large part in the gathering of these traitorous French . . ." He spoke now half to explain to his officers, half to let his words shape the direction of his thoughts, for somewhere this girl kept returning to his mind, as if she held the key to many of the new problems that confronted him.

"She must have been instrumental in arranging Abbott's escape," he went on, knowing that he was indicting himself as he spoke. "But it is certain that Abbott alone, a stranger here, could never by himself have brought this guerrilla army together. No, this Chaumont woman is a member of the underground, and her plans have been carefully arranged beforehand, for days, perhaps.

"That is why we are being so cautious in dealing with these French, for we must either kill or capture every last one of them. We must get our hands on Abbott again. It is only by getting together all the factors involved in this . . . this . . ."

HE LET his voice die away and he fingered the radio message that Mayer had brought him, the one Von Zweig had sent in answer to the Major's information about the impending attack. He tapped his fingers on the paper.

"We came originally," he said, accenting his words by a slow nodding of his head, "to spend a long time here on a plan which we considered had

excellent possibilities of success. That such success was indeed possible, we have all seen. Perhaps I was premature in so informing the High Command, for they have now included us in an extremely vital tactic within the next few days."

He lifted the paper and let it fall. "Gentlemen, an American fleet is crossing the Atlantic to re-inforce the British and Russians in the east. Our information is that some twenty warships are escorting almost a hundred cargo vessels of every description, with planes and tanks and munitions. Such a convoy might decide the battle for Suez, for the Caucasus . . . possibly the war. The Americans are expected to sail through the Mediterranean; the tactic is daring, but we expect daring from them. A few weeks ago the American carrier *Wasp* put in at Malta, you will recall.

"We must bring all our force to meet them. The Italian fleet is next to useless. Our Africa and Sicily based planes will be matched by carrier-borne planes from the fleet; our submarines cannot be expected to do much damage, especially if the British, as we expect them to, send out a large convoy of destroyers to meet them.

"But if we could put ten of our little submarines into action—into that decisive action—if we could sink the carriers and some of the cruisers—then, gentlemen, we would be safeguarding a victory that is almost ours . . ."

He looked around at them, knowing the effect of his words.

"Marshal Von Zweig has told us everything, you see," he nodded. "He wants us to understand how great our role is, how incalculably valuable we are to his plans. The Marshall does not know that the success we thought we had achieved yesterday is not as

complete as we thought. At this moment it appears far off indeed, if not hopeless."

He lit a cigarette and waved it in a hand before him. "But it is not hopeless, believe me. The problems must be solved and they will be solved. We must now get ready to remove an obstacle, to accomplish a task with utmost caution and determination. Understanding the role of this Chaumont woman, and once we have Abbott in our hands, I believe we will find the answers that now seem so elusive to us . . ."

A macabre smile lit his lean features as he added, "We have not yet exhausted our resources. We have ideas, which, while they do not concern all of you immediately, may speedily end our difficulties. I leave you that thought, and I ask each of you to remember what has been asked of us. Good luck."

He watched them file out, and long after they had gone he was standing there. The smile that had been on his face had long since faded, and now, alone, he felt he could scarcely draw another breath. His mind kept exploring the myriad, meaningless tunnels of thought that had been dug in his brain, exhausting him.

He thought of the optimism with which he had spoken to his men. He had handled it well; he was certain they believed him. Now, if anything were to happen to him, they would remember that Von Bruckner had been on the verge of success. If anything were to happen to him . . .

It would be easy, when it was time. They would say: "*He was a man of exceptional bravery. He rushed into the enemy's point-blank fire, leading his men. His death is a great loss to the Fuehrer . . .*" There was no other way out for him now, and he felt al-

most thankful that the exit had been left him, and when he thought of the impending battle, he felt nothing . . . nothing but a calm, cold, numbness . . .

CHAPTER VIII

THEY were ready. In the cool of descending night, the air had a quiet, electric feel to it, a hushed expectancy. Lights flickered in several places in the camp and there was no one about, but if one listened closely, one could hear the strains of an accordion playing. That was Beidermann's idea—it sounded relaxed, normal.

Six planes had arrived during the afternoon, gliding in soundlessly. They had brought almost as much as had been hoped for, and Beidermann had toiled ceaselessly, supervising everything. Every little hillock, each declivity, was known and accounted for. The mobile force was in position, waiting the signal.

At a quarter past eleven, a courier came back with news. A French scout had been observed edging through their lines. He had been allowed to come and go. Later, other scouts felt the patrol lines, and, acting under instruction, one patrol had challenged the empty air, as it were, and allowed the scouts to go on, thinking they had eluded the patrol, deceived it into believing they were mistaken. At half-past eleven, a general movement was observed and left unhindered; a long column of the enemy was moving down in a south-easterly direction, evidently intent on attacking from the least logical sector—the south.

They were carrying several machine guns, but most of the men were armed with rifles and grenades. Approximately a hundred and fifty men were counted in the southern sector. These

broke into smaller units and formed a fan. Fifty more went due east, and a small force began edging in through the north patrols.

"The attack," said Beidermann, "will begin with a surprise assault on the sentry patrols in the north. The moment we rush to their defense, the enemy will start a feint from the north-east. When we answer that, the main force will come up from the south, with the intention of taking the camp itself and whatever materiel is there. And so our plan is as follows . . ."

2

AT TEN minutes past twelve, shortly after the changing of the patrol, which was carried through normally, it began to rain. It was an unseasonal rain, warm and dirty, and coming from heavy, low-flying cloud formations that scudded before a growing wind. Far to the east there were rumbles of thunder.

Beidermann said: "The attack will begin at any moment—they cannot afford to be discovered if there should be lightning."

Five minutes later, shots were heard from the north patrol and a red rocket flare shot into the dirty sky. Pre-arranged lights began flaring everywhere in camp, and a squad of soldiers began running about with lanterns, calling loudly, simulating a camp coming to life. A few moments later, two scout cars went roaring down the road with throttles wide open. A searchlight opened up from the second north patrol and was promptly shattered. Two more patrol cars swept down the road but like the first two, they were empty, save for their drivers and a single man armed with an automatic rifle.

Von Bruckner put on a rain-coat and started out the door when Beidermann

stopped him. "We are fighting, Beidermann," said the Major. "Did you thing I would remain here?"

"But at any moment now—"

The Major shoot his head and walked past him, down the veranda, looking toward the north. Almost immediately, shooting had followed from the north-east. He knew the patrols, scattering to meet it, would fall back at first, offering little resistance. In the barns and sheds every spare motor was started running, and more searchlights began to flick on, sweeping the fields. Trucks filled with troops rode out of camp toward the north-east. After a few hundred yards they stopped and the men leaped out and started running back toward camp while the empty trucks roared ahead.

The rain was coming down in thick sheets, turning the roads to rivers of mud, putting a grey haze over everything. The north-east sector was blazing with activity. Beidermann had planted guns and mortars there long before, but the French, not knowing this, could only assume that the guns were being transported there. A small holding force, long in position, gradually began to reveal itself, firing from new, unexpected places, as if it had just arrived.

Von Bruckner started for the large barn just as a star-shell went up and hung in the murky, wet sky. Far below it, tracer bullets cut the night into innumerable thin slices. Two mortars opened up, and the light of the star-shell showed a dark, two-headed mountain of earth rising up suddenly, falling back silently. The French were making no attempt to gain ground, content to draw off the Germans.

In the barn, Leutnant Keller, in charge of supply, was arranging the flow of materiel. The bulk of their forces were already moving for the

south, adding to the main forces stationed there. As the Major entered, the radio speaker beside Keller spoke. It was Beidermann's voice. "*Achtung, Leutnant Keller! Ready to move truckloads of motorcycles at once!*" There was a pause, and Beidermann spoke again, this time to the north-east sector: "*Achtung, Leutnant Mittler! Begin counter-attack at your discretion!*" The effect of the counter-attack would lead the enemy to believe the Germans had arrived there in force.

Von Bruckner went up to Keller. "Leutnant, you will take me in this scout car to the south sector. Assign the sergeant to your duties." He said it in a way that forbade Keller even the attempt at objection. He sat down in the car, and a moment later they left, cutting behind the barn and starting a wide circle toward where the French had concentrated their largest force.

THE sky was an angry mixture of brown and red fire, swept by rain and wind, carrying the hammer and thunder of battle in gusts. They had gone no more than a hundred yards when a searchlight, sweeping the field, caught them in its beam, and instantly, a second swung over and held them. The next instant they both swept by and the radio in the car spoke. "*Achtung, Major Von Bruckner; Leutnant Keller! Return at once to headquarters by order of Captain Beidermann!*"

"I am going back, sir," Keller said, turning the car around.

There was nothing the Major could do. The circumstances of battle were such that a Leutnant might, under certain conditions, command a Field Marshal. The command of the battle was Beidermann's; it could not be countermanded without his full authority being taken away.

A star-shell went up, and a second, fired in the north-east, went streaking crazily along the horizon and exploded fifteen feet from the ground, two hundred yards away. Suddenly, Von Bruckner gasped something and switched on the headlights of the car.

"The gorilla!" Keller shouted.

In that instant, as abruptly as it had started, the rain stopped. The gorilla stood there, crouching, staring into the lights of the car as if they had hypnotized it. It was breathing heavily and it was drenched, its shaggy hair clotted, glistening in the light, then slowly, it backed away and loped out of range of the lights.

"After it!" Von Bruckner cried.

Swiftly, Keller started the car again, and suddenly hell opened up in the southern sector. A dozen star-shells flew into the clearing sky, making it as light as day, weird with shadows and reflected light, ablaze with gunfire. The hammering of new motors mingled with the broken stutter of machine guns—that would be the mobile force, Von Bruckner realized. They would break through the enemy's fan, coming up behind it, herding the enemy toward concealed gun emplacements. . . .

They were almost at the house when the new cry of alarm went up in camp. The searchlights had picked a mass of cavalry moving down from the silent north sector! There had been no provision for them!

Instinctively, Keller swung the wheel and started for the north, and as he did so, Captain Mayer came running out on the veranda, calling to them. But his voice was drowned out by the shouts of those who swept past him—technicians, supply men, the house guard, the radio men—all were running toward the barn, grabbing what weapons were left, jumping into cars, forging north to plug the gap.

This was Von Bruckner's chance! He climbed into the back, balancing himself as the car lurched ahead, riflemen hanging to its sides, and he fired a quick test burst from the mounted machine gun. A staccato thunder came down from the sky, and he realized that Beidermann had called in the plane and its parachutists!

Out of the night, held in cross-beams of light, the first wave of horsemen swept down toward the camp. A hundred and fifty yards, a hundred, seventy-five . . . sixty . . . and the field opened its fire on the charging cavalry! Fifty yards away, two horses reared in terror and fell back on their haunches. Another rode into them, its rider leaping off at the last moment. The moment he set foot to the ground he clutched at his belly and pitched forward. The horsemen behind him came surging through, trampling over the fallen mounts. The searchlights had made them perfect targets, but their speed had brought the bulk of them safely into such close range that the lights now revealed friend and foe alike.

VON BRUCKNER, standing erect, swung the machine gun on its pivot, guiding its hail of death. Eight or nine horsemen, having broken through the lines, wheeled and made for his car, the center of resistance. Von Bruckner swung the gun and squeezed the trigger. Two lights came full on the charging cavalry, paling the little orange flicks of fire from their pistols. The windshield was shattered and opaque; in the front seat, Keller, who had been firing a carbine, let the gun fall from his hands and slumped gently against the door. A soldier beside the Major screamed and fell over the gun.

The Major threw him out of the car with a sweep of his arm. He crouched beside his gun. He could see the men's

faces, the foam on the horses' mouths. His gun spat at them, slashing them. Two horsemen went down, a third, a fourth, saber raised, fell against his mount's neck and the horse veered and headed into camp. A fifth went down as if it had run into a wall, but on they came.

Fifteen yards, ten, five—and they were at the car itself, plunging past it, wheeling, returning to attack. The world became an inferno of flame and thunder. A horseman swung up alongside of the car and slashed his saber. It cut into the side of a soldier who stood at Von Bruckner's side. The saber swung upward again and the Major fired his automatic—he could have touched the horseman. Again the Major fired and the bullet opened a black hole close to the horseman's mouth.

A group of soldiers had fought their way through the swirling melee to the car, and with bayonets they fought off the succeeding charges, thrusting the dripping weapons into horses and riders alike. Of the original group that had charged the car, none were now left. The Major's gun had accounted for more than a third of the total cavalry.

Some had broken through and continued to the house. He had heard shooting everywhere, in the barns, the sheds, the center of camp. A fire had been started in one of the sheds; it had blazed up furiously, lending a red pall to the terrible scene of death, but it had been put out. What was left of the attacking forces had gathered again for a new assault, starting closer this time.

But now the fields behind them opened with fresh, deadly bursts of fire, coming from the Tommy guns of the paratroops. Von Bruckner could remember, vaguely, the sound of the plane coming and returning two or three times, and once, looking up, he had seen

little puffs like small white clouds floating down close together.

The advancing paratroops broke up the new attack before it could begin. The gathered horsemen scattered to avoid forming a concentrated target, and as they each made off, the searchlights picked them up and held them until they were cut down. And now, almost for the first time, Von Bruckner became conscious of the sounds that had dinned in his ears all through the battle—men shouting, screaming, cursing, praying—horses whinnying with terror, rearing and plunging, rifle fire and the steady clatter of machine guns. The sounds had quieted now, but he could still hear them. Somewhere near him a man was sobbing.

He saw Captain Mayer come running toward him. When Mayer was at his side, he could not hear what he was saying. He stood there, drunkenly, seeing the dead men on all sides of him, feeling the blood on his hands, seeing for the first time that his right arm had been slashed by a saber. The camp was still alive with the sounds of battle as isolated horsemen were caught, but the battle was over. The paratroops had come out of the fields and into camp.

"Major Von Bruckner—the gorilla—it's in the house!"

VON BRUCKNER, listening, could hear the occasional explosion of mortars in the south sector and once a machine gun chattered, but for the most part the only sounds there were of motors. There were still motorcycles leaving camp for the south sector—in effect, three separate battles had been fought, and now the last was ending.

Slowly, the Major turned to Mayer, hearing what he had said for the first time. "I tried to call you before," Mayer was saying, "when the gorilla first went to Devoli's room—"

"What are you saying?"

"It's in there with him—it's talking to him!"

Von Bruckner shook his head. He took hold of Mayer's arm and climbed out of the car. Then, quickly, he began walking toward the house while Mayer told him what had happened. The gorilla had escaped during the battle—it had smashed open the door to its shack and run into the fields, and then, for some reason, it had returned to Devoli's house and it had gone straight to Devoli's room. One of the men had shot at it and missed, but when the gorilla made no move, continuing on its way without molesting anyone, Beidermann had ordered the men to let the beast do what it wanted, and he had sent Mayer to call the Major.

All during the battle, the gorilla had remained in Devoli's room, talking to him. Devoli had been unconscious part of the time, and later Mayer had recorded part of their conversation. The gorilla was still with him. . . .

Reaching the house, the Major went straight to Devoli's room. Outside the door, together with several technicians who were busy with recording machinery, was Lieutenant Faber. His eyes were shining and his face was alive with fever and excitement.

"Don't go in, sir," he whispered anxiously. "We've everything here! We've found out about the drugs—the girl has some . . ."

Von Bruckner nodded as Faber, listening through earphones, let his voice die away. Presently, Faber said, "Dr. Devoli wants the gorilla to leave now—to run away. It doesn't seem to understand him. He's had to say the same things over and over many times before—the gorilla is useless without the drug and—*it's coming out!*"

At a quick signal, the men backed away. Slowly, the door opened, and

the gorilla came out. Its eyes were tiny and bloodshot and dull, with little understanding in them, and its manner was docile, lethargic. It started walking through the group of men, when Faber said, "Go back to your house and stay there. I'll bring you the girl and the drug."

The gorilla turned towards Faber. Its mouth opened and moved soundlessly a moment, then it spoke, and its voice was a deep, rumbling sound, throaty and uncertain. "Yes, I will . . . wait . . . but bring . . . the . . ." And then, without finishing, it ran a hand over its lips, touching them, as if bewildered by its own act of speaking, and ever so slowly, it walked away, going out.

Faber turned to two of the technicians. "Stay with it," he ordered. "See that no one harms it. Keep the men away from it."

Von Bruckner watched the great beast until it was gone. He could not understand the meaning of what he had seen, but his mind was spinning, trying to see where this fitted in with what he had thought. He felt a fire in him, a tremendous anxiety. He grasped Faber's arm—it was the hand he had one—and cried, "Let me hear the records, Lieutenant!"

3

HALF an hour later, Von Bruckner said, quietly, "There are certain parts I want to hear again. I'll go through it once more." He lit a cigarette deliberately, puffed once or twice and scanned the notes he had made. One of Mayer's men was taking down the whole thing in shorthand. Beidermann, in the field, had shortly before radioed in that he had taken Abbott prisoner and was bringing him in.

"Begin," said Von Bruckner.

And so he heard it again, the incredible conversation, the soft, strained voice of Dr. Devoli speaking to the gorilla and the gorilla, seldom understanding without repetition, its mind chaotic, filled with fear of the noises that kept breaking into their conversation, starting and jumping, and Devoli trying to keep it quiet, trying to make it understand, crying out feebly. . . .

"Get the drug," said Devoli. "There is a girl here, a friend, who has the drug you need."

"Drug . . . *The girl is very beautiful . . .*"

"Go to her. She has the drug I have been giving you. It will clear your mind. There are things you must understand here. The Major is my enemy. He must be destroyed. You must not do anything he—"

"Enemy? *But you said . . . he was your friend. I want to tell you why I wore the clothes you gave me . . . that night in the jungle . . .*"

"It does not matter. I understand. Listen to me! You must go to the girl. She has the drug you need. Do not do anything to these men here until you have the drug. They are my enemies."

"*The girl is very beautiful. I will go to her.*"

"These men here are fighting with friends of mine. After you have the drug, you will understand why you must destroy them. You must save my friend Abbott and the girl, and you must not do what these men tell you to do."

"*They want me to tell the others . . . they killed Yawwa and Moga . . . Yawwa and Moga were angry . . . they wanted to return to the jungle . . . and I want to return . . .*"

"And you will return, but first you must help my friends to escape. It will be easier for you after you have gotten the drug. You must not fear it. It will clear your mind. It will quiet

the emotions that trouble you. You must overcome the emotions . . ."

"*The girl is beautiful. I want to go to her because she . . .*"

"Listen to me! Listen to what I am saying!"

"*But I want to help you. I want to take you with me. Why do you say these men are your enemies? You said the Major was a friend . . .*"

"Listen to me. The gorillas all obey you. You must not do—"

"Pardon me, sir," interrupted Lieutenant Braun. "Captain Beidermann is arriving."

Von Bruckner got up, signifying he had heard as much as he wanted. Outside he heard the sounds of motors coming out of the south, and he went out to the veranda with Mayer. Searchlights were trained on the large central area of the camp, making everything bright. Troops stood at attention; the parachutists came out of the sheds, junior officers barked orders.

To Faber, the Major said, "Go to Chaumont's room. Search it thoroughly—tear her clothes to bits, if you have to, but bring me all her personal belongings and the drug."

THE mobile force came riding into camp, escorting trucks filled with prisoners, and at the head of the column was Beidermann, in his scout car. He had come through unscathed, a bright, calm figure in his yellow oilskin coat, blinking in the glare of the lights. He got out of the car and waited for the trucks to begin unloading. The prisoners came out of the trucks, tired, ragged, many of them wounded, soaked to the skin. They began filing into the barn quietly, like trapped animals, and then Beidermann spoke to an officer beside him, and the officer pointed to one of the prisoners, who was taken out of the line and taken off by himself, under

heavy guard. It was Abbott.

Then Beidermann came up to the veranda and saluted smartly, and Von Bruckner could see how weary he was. "Sir, I have the honor to inform you that the task you assigned me has been successfully completed."

Von Bruckner took his band and led him inside. There was little formality in the way he thanked Beidermann, and when Beidermann started to say that he knew what the Major had done—"Without your inspired leadership against the cavalry attack, sir, all might have been lost—" Von Bruckner passed over it quickly, asking questions about the battle. Remembering how, a few hours before, he had been prepared to die, he felt an intolerable anger towards himself. He felt re-born now, confident. He spoke of the details of what had happened, asking questions about Abbott. The American had killed many men before he was captured.

"We'll deal with him later," said Von Bruckner. "We may need him, but right now we must decide as to the disposition of the others." Lieutenant Faber came down the stairs, carrying a handkerchief in one hand. He saw the two officers together and went to the other end of the room. Von Bruckner said, "I will read a general order of court martial."

"Sir, do you intend to—" Beidermann began.

"What else would you do?"

Beidermann nodded. "Technically we are correct, sir. These men have no status as prisoners of war, since their country is not at war. They are hand-dits, with no belligerent rights."

"Well put, Captain. You will execute them in the morning."

He went to Faber and took the handkerchief. Inside were three capsules, filled with a pale green powder. Von Bruckner's face twisted as he juggled

the capsules around in his hand. "Is that all?"

"Yes, sir. She had nothing else. Some clothes, a photograph, bits of jewelry—I believe the drug was what you wanted, sir?"

"Of course. Will you tell Captain Mayer that I would like the entire staff assembled here as soon as the situation is in order? And then join me—I will be in Devoli's room."

He went down the short hall and let himself into Devoli's room. Dr. Friedrich was there. Von Bruckner said, "What are you doing here?"

"He is very ill," said Friedrich, anxiously. "The gorilla—"

"We have dozens of our own wounded, Doctor!" the Major snapped. "Join the other doctors at once!"

When Friedrich had left, Von Bruckner stood beside Devoli's bed. The old man lay with his eyes open, looking up at him. Dry hits of spittle hung from his lips. His eyes were dull and lustreless, but he breathed, "I know what you're doing . . . You'll never win . . ."

Von Bruckner smiled and sat down. He opened his hand and showed Devoli the three capsules. "I don't think you're too ill to understand this, Doctor?"

The old man's head moved from side to side. His white hair seemed yellow and brittle, and his face shone with waxy pallor. "It will do you no good," he whispered. "If you use the drug, either he will kill you . . . or you will have to kill him . . ."

"But there are other gorillas, Doctor. We can duplicate the compound of this wonderful drug of your."

The faintest suggestion of a smile, distorted, ironic, flitted across the aged man's face. He lifted himself half out of bed on his elbows, staring at Von Bruckner. "*There is only one gorilla,*" he whispered. "*Did you know that—only one gorilla?*"

VON BRUCKNER sprang to his feet, his hands clenched, then suddenly he grabbed the old man's bedclothes and knotted them in his hands. "You old fool!" he rasped. "Did you think I didn't know that?" His face was livid, his voice low and furious, but filled with triumph. "There are things about your gorilla that even you didn't know!" he cried.

When he let Devoli fall back to the bed, the old man continued staring at him, and the smile remained, then little by little his eyes began to close, and his features relaxed. His breath caught in his throat once and then he was still. But even after he had died, the corners of his mouth remained fixed, as if he were still smiling.

They were still thus, the dead man and Von Bruckner, when Faber came in minutes later. Faber stood beside the bed, looking down at the old man, seeing he was dead. Slowly Von Bruckner stood up.

"We were right, Faber," he said. "There was only one gorilla—the one that spoke, the one that changed the brassards." He nodded to himself as he went on speaking, as if confirming his thoughts. "Devoli kept its understanding with this drug. . . ."

He held out the three capsules, then one by one he opened them and spilled their contents into his palm. He looked at the powder and slowly turned his hand over, so that the little grains fell to the floor.

"But, Major, that drug—"

"No, Faber. We have no use for the drug any longer. It was a weapon in our enemy's hands—but we have a better weapon—we know how to control the gorilla without the drug!"

"I'm afraid I don't understand, sir."

Von Bruckner nodded. "Think, Faber, think. All this time there was one gorilla, understanding everything

about us, yet doing nothing to hinder us. Why? What bond kept it here? It had not been given this drug for days—what kept it obedient? Tonight, frightened by the sounds of battle, it started to run off, yet when it saw us, its first instinctive move was to return to Devoli. Why? And you remember how it kept saying again and again that it wanted to protect Devoli, that it thought of the girl. . . .

"What lay behind all this? An emotion, Faber—*some kind of an emotion!* It didn't matter which. It acted where the drug didn't! And now that we know this, we also know how to play on this animal's emotions!"

His eyes kindled into fire as he gripped Faber's arm, and he said, softly, "I am going to play on this animal's emotions, and the price of our victory will be the doom of our enemies! They will provide the motivating power for its emotions!"

He left the room and Faber abruptly, moving quickly. He went through the living room where several officers had already come and went outside. There were lights in the east field, shining on the transport plane which had landed not long before. There was movement everywhere, men bringing in equipment, assisting the wounded, eating, smoking. He crossed the center of camp to the improvised hospital. It was filled with the odors of dead and wounded, with the sweet smell of ether and the sharp pungency of medicines, with the sounds, metallic and human, that followed the wake of battle.

There he took aside one of the doctors and showed him the empty capsules. "Fill these with a light green powder," he said. "It doesn't matter what—something harmless."

A FEW minutes later he left, walking toward the little shack where the

gorilla had been housed, and where it had gone again. As he passed through the sentry lines, and as the soldiers saw him, the word spread quickly. He felt the tense expectancy of the soldier from whom he borrowed a flashlight. The broken door had been hastily repaired with stout timbers, but there was no lock.

Without pausing he opened the door and went in. His flashlight pierced the interior darkness with a slender white beam, like a finger searching, and the finger found the gorilla standing at the window. He struck a match and turned the wick up inside a lantern. Soft, yellow light flooded the room.

Von Bruckner stood there silently, then he held up a capsule between thumb and forefinger. "I've brought you the drug," he said, walking toward the gorilla, his hand outstretched. "Dr. Devoli and I just spoke about you. He told me the truth about you—"

"No."

The Major stopped advancing. He didn't understand the note in the gorilla's voice; the denial had been half a question. He said, "I know you were the only one of the three here that understood. I know that only you can speak. Perhaps there are things I don't know, but I am your friend, as I am Devoli's. He told me to give you this drug, that it would clear your mind. . . ."

The great beast remained silent and immobile. The yellow light of the lantern danced in its tiny eyes, and behind it, its grotesque, enormous shadow covered the wall and hung from the low ceiling.

"You don't want the drug, do you?" said Von Bruckner. "You want the girl. . . ."

The silence continued unbroken and oppressive. Something more strange than he could yet imagine lay in this

small, hot room, Von Bruckner felt. What was it that Devoli had had in mind? He watched the gorilla, seeing its powerful neck relax, its great head sagging to its chest, and then spoke, and its voice was low and uneasy.

"Give me the drug."

The Major came up quite close to the gorilla and held the capsule out. The gorilla took it in his black, leathery hands, their surfaces dark and gleaming in the yellow light. A subdued sound, almost a groan, came from it, and when it swallowed the capsule, its hands went to its throat and it gulped in mouthfuls of air, its wet, cruel fangs exposed.

Presently the Major said, "You must be feeling better already. You know you do because it's always been that way. Your head is clear and you know I am your friend and Devoli's. If I were not his friend, would I have brought a doctor for him? If I were not your friend, would I have brought you the drug he wanted you to have?" He let his words sink in, and then he added, softly, "If I were not your friend, would I offer you the girl? Did you think Devoli and I didn't know you wanted her? . . ."

The gorilla looked down at the floor, then, for some reason, it brought its hands up and regarded them, the gnarled, powerful fingers half closed. It touched its face and looked at Von Bruckner.

THE Major came closer, as close as he dared. "Do you know what Devoli is going to do for you?" he whispered, his eyes wide with the wonder of his own words. "*Devoli has found a way to get you a human body! As soon as our work here is done, he is going to undertake a secret operation that will make a man of you! Do you understand that? He will do all this because*

he knows how much you want her. . . . And now that he had said it, Von Bruckner waited. He had gambled heavily on the effect of these words; he had planned them long before, knowing what he did, conjecturing the rest, and he had gambled now when he watched the gorilla look at its hands and touch its face. It was as if he could read the great beast's mind, for as much as it wanted the girl, it realized that it was an animal. But would its fogged brain be capable of assimilating the thought Von Bruckner had planted there?

He saw the way the huge animal's head lifted suddenly, the way its eyes glistened. It forced itself back against the wall, as if to steady itself—the way a man might, hearing something that startled and shook him—and its nostrils dilated and its breathing became audible. "Devoli said that?" it breathed. "Devoli told you that?"

Slowly, the Major nodded his head.

The gorilla kept looking at him, then it turned, its hands gripping the window bars, its back to him. It kept looking out of the window for a long, full minute.

"But first," said Von Bruckner, quietly, "you must return to the jungle. You must come back with many of your friends, fifteen or more of them—friends like Yawwa and Moga, and you must tell them to obey me, and you will—"

"Devoli said you were his enemy."

Von Bruckner thought swiftly. His plan was working. Everything was proceeding as he had seen it in his mind—everything but the initial distrust that Devoli had put in the gorilla's mind. Was this what Devoli had banked on? Had he felt that nothing Von Bruckner could say or do would remove the doubt Devoli had put there? It was all he had to do then . . . to remove that doubt—

"I cannot take you to Devoli now,"

he said, softly. "You saw how ill he is, and now he is asleep. But you know that there is a man here named Abbott, a good friend of Devoli's. Devoli told me after you had gone that he had asked you to save him, but Abbott is in no danger. It was only Devoli's illness that made him speak that way. If you still doubt me, I will bring Abbott here to tell you I speak the truth!"

After a moment, its back still to the Major, the gorilla nodded.

Von Bruckner left quickly. Walking back to the main house he saw that men and officers paused in their duties as he re-appeared. They had suffered terrible losses in spite of the elements that favored them, for the French had fought savagely and surrendered only when resistance had become totally impossible. The battle had cast a pall over the camp, yet under it Von Bruckner could feel the pulse of excitement everywhere, like a fever running through the men.

ON THE verandah he found several of his officers waiting for the scheduled meeting to begin. He sent Leutnant Mittler to bring Abbott to him, and sent for Beidermann. When the Captain appeared, Von Bruckner said to him, "There will be no meeting. I expect we will be in Dakar within thirty-six hours—"

"Sir, if this—" Beidermann began eagerly.

"Yes, Beidermann, matters have taken their final turn, at last. You will assume charge of the preparations for our departure. Radio Dakar and Tripoli and have planes here. We are bringing back perhaps a score of the gorillas. Your engineers will destroy everything that is left behind—not a trace of this cursed place is to remain intact. . . ."

When they brought in Abbott, Von Bruckner was ready for him. Abbott

seemed very tired. Evidently the doctors had not had time to come to him, for the bandages he still wore around his chest were torn and filthy. But in his eyes burned an implacable hatred, and his bearing was erect and deadly calm. Von Bruckner liked it better that way.

He surveyed the tall young man, saying nothing. He saw that even then, disarmed, wounded, exhausted, Abbott's eyes took in everything in the room, as if searching for something that might offer the chance to escape. How dangerous one man might be, the Major thought, when that man was determined and courageous. Scores lay dead and wounded tonight because of this man. For a moment the Major's mind flashed back to the scene of battle as it had been hours before, the smell of gunpowder, the roar of guns, the cries of men. . . . How sweet this man's death would be; how sweet his coming anguish and torture . . . but quickly now—to tell him quickly, to let his resolution harden, to break him more easily . . .

Von Bruckner said: "You are going to perform a special favor for me, Abbott. I am going to take you to Dr. Devoli's gorilla. You will tell the gorilla that I am Devoli's friend, that Devoli trusts me, and that the gorilla is to do what I ask of it."

Abbott waited, and when he saw that the Major had finished speaking, his weary face broke the least bit and a smile started to form, but at the last moment it didn't, and he stood there. "You think so?" he said.

"Yes," said Von Bruckner, simply, and turning to Mittler he said, "Bring down the Chaumont woman."

In the moments that followed, the Major paid no further attention to Abbott. He lit a cigarette and walked about, talking to Captain Mayer who

showed him the message he was sending; he met Captain Auberclaus, who had commanded the parachute troops; he studied the reports of the casualties. And when Jeanne Chaumont came down, he said nothing when she rushed toward Abbott and he took her in his arms.

He allowed them a few brief moments thus, during which neither Abbott nor the girl spoke, as if there were no words for them now, and then he quietly ordered that both be taken outside.

They were led to within a few yards of the shack that housed the gorilla. Here Von Bruckner had Abbott and the girl separated, then Von Bruckner came close to Abbott, so that his words would not be heard by the girl. "I offer you the choice that was given me," he said, his voice casual. "The gorilla will do what I want if you follow my orders . . . or . . . it will obey me if I give it the girl. You see, Devoli's almost human animal has developed a human weakness—" he could not resist a short, abrupt laugh—"for beauty. It appears it is quite in love with her."

Having said this, the Major returned to where the girl stood and took her hand in his. For the first time since the night before, his eyes met hers. He had first dreaded this moment, then looked forward to it. There was no fear in her eyes, nothing but resignation, not even curiosity. How beautiful she was. Her full lips were partly open, her hair braided, her clothes as carefully arranged as if she were going to a dance. But he hated her, Von Bruckner knew—he hated her as much for the personal treachery she had practiced on him as for the things she represented. He could have killed her with his hands.

He gripped her wrist and took a step forward. He had been prepared for the possibility of her resistance, but there was none; she was walking with him

toward the shack. . . .

IN THAT moment, an odd, pleasurable calm came over Von Bruckner. The scene became indelibly impressed upon his consciousness. The night, cool and dark, the camp, lying around them, the stars that shone down on them, the men waiting tensely, some standing about right near them, none of them really understanding what he was doing—it was a feeling of insuperable power, and more, of revenge—and more than that, of the secure knowledge that both revenge and his plans would succeed. He was no more than a few feet away from the door now, and the timeless quality of the moment was ending, rushing swiftly now—

"I'll go," said Abbott.

He had spoken quietly, but in the hush his voice had been as loud as the report of a gun. Von Bruckner heard him, but somehow he kept on walking. He reached the door and opened it, and looked in. The gorilla was standing in the center of the room, as if it had been coming to the door and stopped when it opened.

"Don't you hear me? I said I'll go!"

Von Bruckner stood there, looking at the girl. Did she understand now what he had been about to do? He thought to himself: what would I have done if he had not broken? Would I have taken her in? He knew it was not what he had wanted, that he needed the girl as a constant incentive, as a motivation for the gorilla, yet the thought of what he had appeared to be doing had seized him until its hold was almost unbreakable. But now he stopped. The gorilla had seen the girl, he knew, and he drew her away from the door.

He led her back to the soldiers who had brought her, and motioned the others to let Abbott go. As Abbott started for the shack, he fell in beside

him, mentally comparing Abbott and Chaumont. Of the two, when they understood what Von Bruckner was doing—and she had understood, he knew, understood it at the last moment, when Abbott had spoken—of the two, there was more emotion in Abbott. Abbott's mouth had tightened to a thin slit, his eyes were more active than ever. What had made him break, Von Bruckner wondered. He had felt that Abbott was strong enough to take anything . . . but not this, perhaps. Or perhaps it was because he did not realize the enormity of what he was about to do?

Joe Abbott went into the shack first, Von Bruckner a step behind him. The gorilla had backed away a few feet. Von Bruckner said, "Here is another friend of Devoli's, the man named Abbott. You know him. He will tell you that I am Devoli's friend, and that you are to do what I ask because Devoli wants it."

After a moment, Abbott said, "He is Devoli's friend. Do what he says. He is telling the truth."

"All right," said Von Bruckner. "Leave now." He waited until Abbott had gone out, then he approached the gorilla and said, "Will you do what I ask you?"

The gorilla said: "I want the girl—I want . . . to take her with me . . . to the jungle. . . ."

"When you return," said Von Bruckner.

"Now . . . before I go. . . ."

CHAPTER IX

HE, Olowga, had told him what he wanted. It might all be true, but it did not matter. He regarded the Major and he thought: how long is it since I first saw this man? It seemed a long, long time before—the night Devoli had followed him into the jungle.

... that had been two nights before . . . it was strange then, because he had taken the drug, and now when he tried to think, the thoughts remained distant and half-formed. He had tried to understand the meaning of the shooting he had heard that night; it had startled him so badly at first that he had instinctively run towards the jungle, smashing the door down, wanting only to get away, to find the quiet again—

"I promised you the girl," the Major was saying, "and you shall have her, but not until you've come back."

The thought kept drumming in his brain. Devoli had said there was a way to restore him, Olowga, to a human body. If he closed his eyes and thought about it, it was like the lights he had seen shooting into the sky. It was something that made him tremble, that made it difficult for him to speak, though he could not understand it . . . not entirely, not so that it was something he knew.

"I will not go . . . without her," he said.

He thought he would have liked to explain it to the Major, so that Devoli would not be angry. It was not that he mistrusted them . . . or was that it? He could not believe that they were really going to let him have the girl—but surely Devoli had meant that only after they had made him into a man again. And Devoli could do that; he had made him . . . an animal. . . .

"I want the girl . . . to be with her . . ." he said. "I want her . . . near me . . . and I will come back so that Devoli can make me a man. . . ."

It hadn't sounded like his voice then. There had been too much anger in it. But that was because of the pain he felt. Yesterday it had been almost impossible for him to think at all. It had been the shooting, the noise, that awak-

ened his mind, and when he had gone to Devoli, seeing how ill he was, he had felt himself able to think a little, to remember to take the drug because that was what Devoli wanted.

How odd the Major looked. His face had twisted, and he nodded his head, and as he spoke his teeth showed, and he spoke very quietly and thoughtfully. "You can take the girl with you, but if you do not return with your friends, Devoli will not perform the operation that is to make you a man. Now come with me."

He wondered, at first, why the Major seemed to think that he might not return. Did he think that he, Olowga, did not want to be a man? But that could only be because he did not know that Olowga had once been a man—and so thinking, it seemed strange to him, not only the thought itself, but because he could not remember a name he had once had—and it was only then that he seemed to understand what the Major had just said to him . . . he could take the girl with him!

He could not understand it, but he knew he was glad. The Major had already gone out of the house, and now, slowly, he followed, and at the threshold he hesitated. In the darkness, illuminated in several places by great lights, he saw that many men were waiting outside, and he heard the Major say to one of them: "Radio instructions to all patrols that no harm is to come to the gorilla now going toward the south, nor to those that will return with him sometime within the next twenty-four hours. Make it extremely clear!"

AND then he saw the girl. She was standing among the men, and he heard the Major say to her, in an oddly strained voice, "It seems, Miss Chaumont, that you will accompany our

friend on his journey."

Olowga could not mistake the expressions he saw on the men's faces, the surprise, even . . . horror . . . but the girl did not move, and her expression did not change, and she said nothing. She only turned toward him as he stood at the threshold, as erect as he could, and she looked at him.

Suddenly he came towards her swiftly. The men backed away in quick retreat. He picked her up in his arms, scarcely feeling the burden, and wheeling about, he began running with her. In an instant he was out of the lights again, secure in the darkness, feeling the night wind against his face, the grass underfoot. He went behind the house and headed straight for the jungle, and behind there had been no sound except for the Major's voice crying out, "Remember!"

The girl was not afraid. She lay in his arms without moving, and no sound came from her. He could feel her quick breathing against him, feel her skin, her flesh against him. A great, swift, burning joy was in him. He could not think, he could not do anything, but all the time he was running faster and faster, feeling the strength in him as he had never felt it before.

When he had been running for awhile—he had lost all conception of time—when he had crossed the field of spiny grass and came to the first of the streams he had to pass, he lifted the girl higher. He went into water up to his chest, but he kept her dry, and then, coming out of the stream, he had heard voices near him and several little lights had shot out of the darkness, stabbing him with their rays.

The men had called to each other and he had stopped, their lights still on him, but after a moment, when they did nothing, he began running again, and the lights stayed on him until he lost

them with distance as he went on.

Farther off he knew the jungle was near. He could not see it, but his knowledge was stronger than sight, stronger than the testimony of the smells that came from it, from the hundred sensory things. He knew within him, like the traveler returning home . . . and suddenly he became aware of the fact that the girl was crying, that she had been crying for minutes now, and he had felt her tears against his breast. He could not understand it. He had felt no fear in her, and fear was a thing he knew instinctively. But her tears and her pain were his, and he felt a strange sadness come over him, and then, still thinking so, he felt she had stopped, and she was quiet again.

He had wanted to talk to her, to tell her not to be afraid, but he could not force the words from his throat. He was afraid of what his voice would sound like, and so thinking, he saw the image of himself as he remembered it from the mirror he had secreted, and he saw himself as the girl was seeing him . . . and he remembered what the Major had told him about Devoli's plan. After that there was no thought, but only feeling.

WHEN he reached the jungle's edge, he took to the trees. In his eagerness he had no patience for the slow foot-travel of man-things. He held the girl with one arm around her waist and swung up into a tree, then began the swift running from branch to branch, the swinging from well-remembered vines, the occasional plunge downward to a new avenue—for the jungle here, because of the gorillas who had lived here for so many months, had become a series of avenues, of known paths and lanes.

The darkness meant little to his eyes, and nothing at all to his other senses.

Long before he saw the other gorillas, he knew they were aware of his return, as he was aware of their gathering, of the word of his return being passed down through the jungle. They were coming from everywhere, beading for the clearing toward which he was going. He knew that some of them had seen the girl he carried in his arms . . .

By the time he reached the clearing, the sounds of the others were unmistakable. The rustling of leaves and vines, the movements of heavy bodies, their occasional grunts and calls were converging; he swung out of a tree on the edge of the clearing and dropped to the ground. Already almost a score of the gorillas were there.

He went to the center of the clearing and let the girl down on her feet. She stood beside him, swaying a moment, holding on to him, then sat down, her hands over her eyes. He had not intended building a fire, but feeling the anxiety, the trembling of the girl, and remembering her tears, he thought it would be better for her if she saw what was around her, rather than let her imagination build things in the darkness, and so he ran swiftly across the clearing and dug his hand down among the roots of an ancient, long dead tree, where, buried under moss and leaves and twigs, wrapped in cloth rags, he had long before hidden a box of matches. He gathered up an armload of dry wood and returned, and quickly built a woodpile, then struck the match to it.

All these things he thought, yet did not really think them as he once had understood the meaning of thought. His thoughts were not logical trains, dependent upon words; they were instinctive, interrelated series of desires and images. He had not thought about the girl and the fire—he had sensed her reaction and built a fire . . .

He watched her as the flames grew,

turning the dark world of his jungle into an orange, flickering, shadowy place of huge forms and new sounds. Her face was colored by the fire, her moving eyes would catch new glints from the flames. From all sides she could see the gorillas coming out of trees, running and walking, hunched over, not like he, Olowga, toward the fire, sitting down and talking to each other quietly.

And yet, though he was not thinking, he knew certain things—and though it was highly involved for him, he knew that he knew. It was not like the drug, there was something new about this. It was the way it had been with Devoli earlier that night, when he had been able to understand little, yet had known many things of which he could not speak because he could not find the words, as if his mind was alive but unable to demonstrate it in the accepted way. Perhaps that was because the things that had once mattered to him were no longer important; what was important now was what he desired. . . .

He had seldom come here during the night and built a fire without wearing the clothes Devoli had given him. It had been one of the many things about him that the others had never understood. But what were they thinking of this girl he had brought with him? How could they begin to understand the presence of a human here? Could they differentiate between the sexes . . . and if they could, as he thought, would they be able to understand that one of them, no matter how strange, no matter if it was The Strange One—would they be able to understand that one of them could feel desire for a woman, for a human female?

THEY had gathered now by the scores, those nearest the fire sitting,

others standing about, moving in closer for a look at the human, moving away muttering. He watched them carefully, picking out those he knew more intimately, though he hardly knew any of them. Once one of them had called out, asking about Moga and Yawwa, though it was not really asking; the words themselves meant that Moga and Yawwa were not hunting with them any longer. Had he answered, he would have expressed the idea that neither of them could feel the urge to hunt anymore, and that the man-things had so done it, but he did not answer and none asked again. He saw they were waiting for him.

He had been standing directly beside the girl. Now he walked away, moving in a circle around the fire, his back toward it, and called out names. He, Olowga, their friend, wanted them to go with him, to give him help in a task that would bring them close to man-things, but the man-things would not harm them, nor would they harm the man-things. It was not a hunt he wanted, nor a searching for new females, but a matter which he could not explain until later.

One by one they responded. Several of those whose names he knew, at once left the larger groups and came near him, others did not; but also there were some he had not called who came. Once he had to say that he asked only for males, but the words he used also meant he wanted the largest and strongest of them, and that made it sound like a hunt, but he did not explain.

He remembered there was a certain number he had been told to take back with him, but it meant nothing to him. There were many now, as many as twice the number of his fingers. They stood together, and he felt that they expected to witness a new, strange thing that would come from the mind of the

Strange One. Perhaps they thought this human with him was to be part of it. Now he would tell them he was leaving her with them, that he would return later for her.

Of all those who had signified their intention to go with him, he knew one well, the one called Wotah, which meant he was quiet and even-tempered. To Wotah, he said, "You will remain here and keep watch over this man-thing. No one is to go near it, or bring hurt to it, or Olowga will be angered, and his anger is a terrible thing."

Wotah said, "It is expected that the anger of Olowga is a terrible thing, and Wotah will remain to keep watch."

Voices chorused in agreement, all eyes fixed on the girl. Olowga had never shown anger, but as Wotah had said, it was feared. Now Olowga raised a hand and pointed north, and the first of his group began moving out of the cleared area toward the trees. He turned toward the girl, and for the first time he found the courage to speak.

"Have no fear. I leave you here now . . . but I will return . . ."

"No!"

She had jumped to her feet, standing close to him, and she reached out and clutched his wrist, not letting him go. Her eyes were a mixture of wonder and fear. He realized she had never heard him speak the language of man-things before. It was as if she had been waiting for this moment.

"No!" she breathed. "You must not leave me here. You must take me back with you . . ." She was untying her hair now, letting the braids out, and from underneath the braids she took out a small white packet of paper. "You must take this—it is the medicine Dr. Devoli told me to give you!"

HE STOOD there, seeing her open the little packet, seeing the tiny

grains of the green powder. Those who had started for the trees had stopped, and a hush had come over all, seeing Olowga and the man-thing talking to each other in a language none understood, as it had been that other night when three man-things had come.

"I have taken the medicine already," he said. "The Major gave it to me. You can see that my mind is . . . clear . . . and no harm will come to you . . ."

She looked at him curiously. "The Major gave it to you," she repeated, then said, slowly, "Where are you going now?"

"To bring my friends to him . . . to help him, as Devoli wanted . . ."

"No!" she cried out again. "He is Devoli's enemy! Don't you understand that? You must know that if you've taken . . ." She kept looking at him, shaking her head, tears running down her face suddenly. "You must listen to me . . ."

He, Olowga, knew she was wrong. The Major was Devoli's friend. He had proved that to Olowga. Had he not given him the medicine? Had not Devoli's friend told him so? Had the Major not told him about the operation that Devoli planned? The girl was wrong. He would leave her there, with Wotah to watch her, and he would not come back for her until the operation was over, until he had been given the body of a man-thing. Then she would not fear him, nor would she say untrue things because she feared him and wanted to return . . .

But, slowly, out of the dark turmoil of his brain, a new thought was forming. If he returned . . . in the body of a . . . man-thing . . . how would Wotah and the others know it was he, Olowga? Would he still be able to talk to them? Would they be able to understand a thing that he himself could not yet understand? How could he have

planned such a thing? He was wrong. He could not think. Fragmentary images flashed across his mind, but he could not seize them.

One thing he knew—the girl was in pain, for she was crying, and he could not bear it. The hand she had held out to him was now at her side, tightly closed. He reached out gently and took her hand and opened it, then he took the packet out of her fingers. With a quick movement, he emptied the packet into his mouth, crumpling the paper and letting it fall at his feet.

He swept a hand out to find something to cling to and he caught the girl, then, realizing that he was dragging her down, he let her go and went reeling across the clearing. A thousand comets swept before his eyes, a thousand storms were born and died, and for an eternity it was still and silent, and the world far away. When he could breathe again, he found himself stretched out on the earth, lying on his back, and overhead the dark cloak of night. He rose to his feet and felt the great throbbing pain sweeping through him.

"I must remember . . . I am Carpenter . . ."

BUT when his eyes lifted and there was the girl, standing a few feet away, he stared at her, remembering. Had she heard what he had said then? Things were returning to him, to the tiny core in him that remained always alive. He had not felt like this when the Major had given him the medicine, but it had been this way every other time—that was why Devoli had shot it at him, because otherwise the pain was too great. . . .

He had sobbed when he spoke before; now he controlled his voice, saying to the girl, "It wasn't the medicine the Major gave me. But why did De-

voli's friend tell me to believe the Major?"

"Abbott told you that?" she breathed, and was about to add something, when she stopped. But he knew then, without her telling him, remembering what he had heard outside the shack, the way Abbott had shouted that he would go. Abbott had been forced into it . . . because the Major had said he would give the girl to him, Olowga . . . Strange, he thought, that he still thought of himself as Olowga, and not Carpenter. How long would the drug last this time? Its effectiveness had been constantly decreasing, and the amount the girl had given him was very small. The degeneration of the man-thing Carpenter into the gorilla Olowga was still proceeding at its terrible pace, making . . .

There it was again. Man-thing, he had thought, thinking the word in Olowga's language.

For a moment he could feel the fear, the . . . horror . . . that must have forced Abbott to lie. But there was hope. The new body, that Devoli had never told him about. That would change things. That was true; the Major might be Devoli's enemy and still have told the truth. He could never have imagined such a lie unless Devoli had told him the whole truth, and Devoli would never betray him. The Major had had his own reasons for telling the truth, but it was the truth. Devoli had—

Was he behaving like an animal, reacting with instinct and desire instead of thought? Was he clinging to something fantastic? It was no more fantastic than what Devoli had done to him in the first place. It was true—Devoli had found a way to restore him to the world of the man-things.

"Do you understand what I am saying?" the girl repeated.

He had not heard. His mind had been far away. He could think more clearly now, but it made little difference because he could not think anything through to the end. It was like being a man-thing, lost in an impenetrable wilderness, unable to move, and then the man-thing found a machete to help him clear a path, but then realized that he did not know the direction to take, nor would that matter, for the wilderness was too vast, too hopeless . . .

"You must not go back," she said.

"But if I do not go back, how can you—"

"It does not matter. The only thing that matters now is that you stay out of the Major's grasp. Don't you see that?"

Yes, he could see it. She was afraid that he would fall prey to the Major's plans again. "But the drug," he started to say, and stopped. The drug might lose its potency at any time; it was no argument.

"Devoli is still there. I cannot leave him there."

"No one matters, not I, nor Abbott, nor Devoli. Only you matter."

"Only I matter," he repeated, curiously. The words sounded so strange to him. Had she forgotten he was a gorilla? But what she said only made it more imperative that he go back for Devoli. Devoli alone knew the secret that could free him. If this girl, as she had said then, voluntarily belonged to him—he could not understand it, nor did he try to—then she would belong to him all the more when he was a man-thing again! But he could not reason with her; he was afraid to reason with her about such things. How could he tell her?

He turned to Wotah and motioned for him to come with them. He lifted the girl in his arms, and at a word from him the waiting gorillas started forward

again, and he was running with them across the clearing.

FAR, far off in the east, the slightest trace of the tropical dawn was showing, a single, pale blue banner of light floating against the dark field of the sky. Overhead, though he sensed rather than saw them, a few silent night birds wheeled. Not far away, a small animal ran across the plain. At the jungle's edge, the band of gorillas heard Olowga speak to them.

It was difficult, trying to tell them what he wanted them to do. He knew from their expressions, from their slight movements and grunts that the task he set before them made them wonder. It was different from what he had said before. One, Jagga, said he had spoken falsely, to trick them. He was not afraid of the man-things, but he had seen how they bunted, killing from a distance with thundersticks.

Olowga said: "You have seen how I can speak with the man-things. I have lived with them. I know their ways. I have no fear of their strength. I have lived with you, and you have seen that I fear nothing, that I have overcome everything. If you do as I have told you, we will overcome the man-things."

After that, even Jagga was silent. To Wotah he said a few words, then to the girl, he said, "If we are not back by noon, Wotah will take you wherever you direct him. You have nothing to fear now. Of all these . . . of all my friends, he is the most trustworthy. I would not leave you if I thought otherwise."

"Will nothing persuade you not to go?"

When he made no reply, she came closer to him and held out her hand. "Then bring back Dr. Devoli and Ab-

bott, and God be with you . . ."

He felt himself trembling, and when he looked into her eyes he had to turn away quickly because there were tears there, and something more . . . something he had never seen there before . . . nor in any human eyes in so long . . .

Then swiftly, without touching her hand, he turned and started running, the others with him.

Across the dark fields they ran, silently, almost twenty forms in the shadowless darkness, one behind the other. Unheeding, they plunged through the streams, through the tall grass, running wet and saggy and only the sound of their breathing to indicate them. When they reached a slight rise of land that gave to the plain itself, they stopped and here Olowga uttered a low sound. The group separated now, five remaining with Olowga, the rest under the leadership of Klaa.

Those with Klaa now crossed the ridge, moving away from the others and walking slowly toward the camp. They were obscured in the gloom in a few moments, but Olowga waited. Presently little lights went blinking across the plain in signal, and other lights answered. They had been seen by the patrols, and now their slow progress would be carefully followed, for almost immediately afterward the staccato harshness of motors echoed over the fields and motorcycles came to escort them.

OLOWGA and the five with him ran along behind the ridge and took the long circle into camp. The patrols would be withdrawn now, thinned out, at any rate, but he took no chances. They crossed the ridge half a mile east and kept running, low-crouching figures in the still night, the wind now blowing toward them. Once, near the camp, they caught the scent of man-things

near them. Olowga motioned them to halt.

Alone, he crept forward. Twenty feet ahead he heard the voices of three man-things. They were sitting in a hole they had dug, and they had a long, heavy gun with them. Inch by inch Olowga came in, his heart quick with the knowledge of what he had to do. He could have circled around them and they would never have known, but later, coming back, the presence of these men where they might not be seen until it was too late, where no wind would reveal them . . . He could not take the risk.

He was five feet away now. He gathered himself into a ball, his great arms outstretched, poised on the balls of his feet. When he sprang there was no sound, nor was there any later. He had come down on the three men, his weight crushed them, his hands seizing two throats and smashing their heads together, and then his forearm, snapping up, had caught the third man under the chin and brought his head back with a cracking noise.

But after he had killed them, Olowga stood for a moment and looked at the dead man-things. He had never killed a man-thing before. How easy it was . . . how great was the power of his arms. An alien joy burned in his vitals, he breathed in deeply and smelled the sweetness of blood. For several moments everything blurred but the new sensation remained sharp, and it was only after an inner struggle that he refrained from crying out aloud.

He returned to the others quickly and motioned them on. They passed a few feet from the dead men, seeing them sitting motionless in the midst of the odor of death. He had wanted them to see that the man-things could be overcome, but now he sensed the contagion of lust and he knew he would

have to watch them carefully; it had stirred them too deeply . . .

Then they were in the east field. Olowga listened carefully and heard the sounds of the camp awaking. He could hear the sounds of the motors from the south, and he knew that the camp had awakened early because Klau and the others had been seen. He had to find Abbott quickly now, and then Devoli, and—

There was thunder in the sky, coming closer swiftly, and all at once it was overhead and had passed, moving out of the north. A moment later it came again from the north, like great hammers beating against the earth, then a third time. Three flights of planes—six, six, and three, flying so low that their exhausts were blue, spluttering streaks of light. The far end of the field showed lights, some blue, some white, and man-things came running from the camp.

He had not envisaged the east field being used, and already the planes were returning, and great searchlights switched on. But their noise was good. Olowga led the others on, coming to the edge of the east field and directly behind the main house. There were voices everywhere, and movement, and the clang of metal, and always more lights; it was impossible to venture out from the protection of the house.

LOWGA thought quickly. He motioned the others to remain where they were, then edged around the corner of the newly built wing and looked into the camp. Trucks stood close together, forming a square, most of them stripped of their tires and metals and movable parts. The sheds and houses had been surrounded with wood and brush, and soldiers were pouring pungent liquids out of cans over the brush. Many of the large lights, and the guns,

the mortars, were all arranged in stacks.

A soldier was approaching Olowga, spilling liquid over the brush. Olowga shrank back against the wall. The soldier stepped closer, doing his work quickly. Olowga reached out with one arm, closed his hand over the soldier's mouth and pulled him in. He held his throat for a moment or two, watching the man-thing's feet dance in mid-air when he lifted him up, and when he let him down again, the feet were still. Then Olowga took off the man's clothes and began to put them on himself. The trousers went on easily, the jacket tore in several places, but the coat held. Then Olowga picked up the deep steel helmet and put it on. He took the can and started back along the front of the house, keeping his head down and spilling the liquid.

When he reached the verandah, he quickly went up the stairs and instantly had to duck into a corner, for of the many man-things in the house, a group now came out and went down the stairs. But one of them, the last, turned back. The lights from the house, coming through the screen, had touched the sleeve of Olowga's coat. He called out, in German: "What are you doing there?"

Olowga lowered his head. The others had gone on, but this one came back up the stairs. "What is your assignment?" he barked. "Answer me at once!"

He came right up to Olowga and stuck a hand under his chin as if to lift it, but he didn't. He slowly withdrew his hand, as if he no longer controlled it, for Olowga had raised his head. Olowga took the hand that was still in mid-air and pulled the man-thing toward him with infinite gentleness. He knew the face of this young officer.

"Wo ist Abbott?"

But the man-thing did not answer.

He stared at Olowga and tried to speak, and then he looked down at his hand, and his mouth moved again but no sound came out. Then Olowga opened his hand and let the man-thing's hand fall from his grasp, crushed and useless.

"Wo gefindet mann Abbott?" Olowga whispered again.

The man-thing groaned: *"In dieses Haus . . ."*

Good. Then Ahhott was in the same house with Dr. Devoli. Olowga saw how the man-thing could not move, how he had not even thought of making any outcry, and he took hold of him and broke his neck. He threw the body over the verandah railing to one side and leaped after it. He ran a few feet along the side of the house to where the new wing faced it at an angle. He gripped a railing and swung himself up. Standing poised an instant, he sprang up as high as he could, launching himself forward at the same time, and he caught the slanting top of the new verandah roof. His fingers dug in tightly and he hauled himself up.

He stood still a moment, collecting himself, getting his bearings. Perhaps three or four minutes had passed since he had left the others, and now the planes were returning, following each other in a single line and dropping ever lower, circling the field in huge, graceful arcs and coming in so that they would run along the beams of light that lay waiting for them on the ground like white paths. Their sound filled the world.

OLOWGA went along the roof to a window. It was dark and screened. He pushed his hand against it until it broke in the middle, then he let himself through and dropped into the room. Listening, he heard voices all through the house. Footsteps coming up,

mounting stairs, voices calling to each other, a door opening. He went to the door and opened it, peering down the hallway. Five or six man-things stood in the hall, facing an open doorway, then others came out, and with them was Abbott. They were taking him out.

There was no time now for cunning. Olowga lowered his head and started down the hall toward the man-things. They heard him coming and turned, and already he was on them, pushing through them, and one of them screamed: "His feet! *Look at his feet!*" They had seen his bare feet beneath the over-long trousers, but now he was past them, having scattered them, and he was between them and the stairway, and they were confused and frightened, still not understanding.

He reached for one of them, grabbing him just below the knees and then raised him and hurled his body into their midst. If the hallway had been less narrow, or they better prepared, they would have brought their guns into play the next instant. As it was, the one gun that did fire hit a man-thing, and Olowga was among them. He had gripped Abbott's clothes and sent him tumbling back into the open room, and alone with the man-things, he went for them.

They fell to all sides, smashing against the walls. He was like a hurricane of death, swift, merciless, implacable, the blood lust in him like a fever, tearing, throwing, pounding, smashing. There was only the sound that came from his throat, a low, terrible sound. In a minute he had killed eight men, but even then he kept at them, mangling their inert bodies, unable to stop him. Finally, when he did stop, he stood crouched over, breathing easily, covered with gore, and his hands kept moving, ever working...

He watched Abbott stoop down and

take away two of the pistols from the dead men, and he had to arrange the words in his mind before he spoke, but he had only said, "I am taking you with me—" when Abbott said: "What of the girl and Dr. Devoli?"

"I have the girl, and I will go for Devoli now."

Abbott looked down the stairway. The roaring of the motors had drowned out the sounds of the short-lived struggle; those who were still down below had heard nothing. He regarded Olowga sharply, then said: "You can't go down there for Devoli now—there are too many of them. You haven't a chance—"

"I must get Devoli."

Olowga spoke softly, but with deadly sureness. He thought of the man-things below and the prospect of more killing only invited him, and when he met Abbott's eyes he saw that Abbott understood what was running through his mind.

"There are more than a hundred men prisoners here," said Abbott, speaking hurriedly. "If we don't help them, they'll be shot. We've got to do something about them first..."

"Devoli comes first."

He didn't understand, Olowga knew; Abbott didn't know why it was so important to get Devoli, more important than anything, than life itself, for without Devoli there was nothing for him, no hope and no life.

"But you'll never get out of there with him!" Abbott snapped, his eyes fixed on the stairway, his guns ready. "If we free the others, it will be easy to get him."

Olowga tried to think about it. He only knew what he wanted; he could no longer think. Downstairs he heard many voices, and someone called up to them, shouting about the delay.

At any moment the bodies might be

discovered. Olowga wondered if the Major had already found out that he, Olowga, was not among the ones that had been sighted. They would not enter the camp; they would stop near it, and at Olowga's call they would scatter and return to where Jagga waited.

Olowga made no sign of acquiescence, but when he started back along the hall, Abbott was behind him. Olowga led the way through the room from which he had come and stepped out on the roof. Suddenly a random light from far off, swinging about, cut across the roof and caught both for an instant. Its arc continued a few yards, then stopped with savage abruptness and returned. Olowga had seized Abbott in his arms and leaped down. Behind them the light zig-zagged crazily, searching for the strange forms it had seemingly discovered; it lingered and gave up.

MEANWHILE Olowga, landing easily, had run toward the rear of the house, still holding Abbott. Before he could remember, he had swept the corner and come into the dark grove where the other five waited. He sensed, rather than saw them, ready to spring and he retreated a step and growled softly to them. Then he let Abbott down and took off the coal-scuttle helmet he still wore. But there was nothing he could do now about the clothes he wore, and the smell of man-thing's blood; they were afraid, Olowga knew, as much of the sound and movement that surrounded them as of the slow advance of the tropical dawn, and Abbott's sudden appearance with him had only added to their confusion.

Abbott himself had gone stiff at the sight of them, their huge forms huddled together, outlined against distant lights in the field. He stood there, sucking in his breath, and then the slight sound was lost in the thunder of several taxi-

ing planes as they drew closer. It wasn't until the roaring died down briefly that he said to Olowga: "Where is the girl?"

Olowga had seen Abbott trying to pierce the darkness, but the question caught him with a sudden, strange pang. Why was this man-thing concerned . . . but then he understood. "Safe," he said. "Across the field with . . . friends of mine . . ."

His hesitation was matched by Abbott's. He could see Abbott's eyes staring at him. Abbott said, "Wait here. I'll be right back."

He was gone so quickly that Olowga had no chance to refuse. Had he wanted to refuse? He could no longer tell; he had surrendered to the judgment of the man-thing. He thought of Devoli and of going back, but he could not move.

When Abbott returned he breathed, "Listen to me closely because I need your help. The men are locked in the barn, and there are six men and two machine guns guarding them. In front of the large shed are several trucks. The first of them contains rifles, the third has boxes of rifle ammunition. We must first overpower the guard, and immediately get the rifles and ammunition to the men in the barn. Do you understand what I am saying?"

"Yes."

"It must be done as quietly as possible because the camp is filled with men, and it must be done very quickly. First the guard, then—"

His voice broke off as motorcycles came roaring into the camp. Men went into the main house. At the same time, three trucks, their headlights on, swung out of the sheds and started lumbering across the field, ignoring the road. The trucks passed within twenty feet of the grove. When they were gone, Olowga spoke softly to the go-

rillas, very slowly, then he said to Abbott, "We are going."

Abbott led the way back around the house, hugging the wall, and he stopped Olowga. Men were talking excitedly on the verandah; he heard Beidermann's voice harsh and demanding. They disappeared inside and Olowga said: "The Major has come across my friends and discovered that I am not . . ."

He knew then, from the slow way Abbott had turned and stared at him, his face, his eyes, frozen, incredulous, that he had made a terrible mistake in speaking then, for the man-things had spoken in German, and he, Olowga, had shown that he understood! Then, suddenly, he swept by Abbott and ran across the center of camp toward the barn, the others a step behind him.

THE impulse had fallen on a bad moment for the start, for one of the six men—they were divided into two groups of three men each—was facing directly towards them. He saw the gorillas racing across the forty yards that separated them, but for a moment, perhaps because he could not be sure, in the reflected light from nearby searchlights, what they were, he gave no alarm. His hoarse shout was too late when it did come. The guns swung around frantically. The nearer one was gripped by Olowga's hand and thrown into the air, the second one said rat-tat and no more, and its bullets had plowed the earth directly in front of it.

It was over before it had begun, but the camp had had its entire attention suddenly focused on what was happening. The men who ran out of the house and those who came from the sheds saw only the end, the dead guards, the swift, blurred figures running toward the trucks, passing in and

out the lights, and one recognizable figure of a man tearing down the bolts that locked the barn!

There were screams from the large shed, and the forms were running from them, from the trucks, carrying rifles and boxes, and two shots rang out from the shed. Suddenly the men from the verandah began firing at the barn doors!

Olowga had been the first to get to the trucks, and he had grabbed a great armful of rifles and loaded the others as they came. Four of them started back to the barn, and he and Puutu had gone on to boxes of ammunition. By then the men in the shed had seen them, and Olowga had run into the center of them, flinging them about. He loaded Puutu and took three boxes himself and started back when the shots came.

He hadn't heard them at once; it was only later, after an indeterminate lapse, that he remembered hearing them, for he staggered as he ran and he knew that one of the shots had hit him. Some thing heavy had smashed him from behind and an intolerable hotness paralyzed his left arm. He almost dropped the boxes, but Puutu, a step ahead of him, wavered as the gunfire started on the verandah, and he sprang ahead, pushing Puutu forward.

It seemed to him that the open barn door was a long way off, that he might never reach it. The brightness of the lights had trapped him and Puutu outside, and the others, who had already disappeared into the barn, could not venture out. Then he saw Abbott come out of the barn, standing beside the door, very cool and straight, the two guns in his hand spinning about as if on a slow wheel. Fire spat from his guns in tiny, continuous streaks, and over the shouting and now continuous crack of gunfire he heard the sounds

of shattering glass. It was as if there were invisible cords attached to the guns in Abbott's hands, and these cords were turning off the lights one by one, until it was dark again.

In this sudden darkness, he tripped and went sprawling over some obstacle in his way, and the boxes hurtled out of his grasp. He heard Abbott's voice, and saw man-things come out of the barn and pick up the boxes. But there were more boxes on the ground than he had been carrying . . . and then he saw Puutu lying dead a few feet away. He had tripped over him.

ALL this time, while Olowga was getting up, while the man-things were carrying the boxes back into the barn, the gunfire kept mounting, and though there was no light to guide it, the bullets whined about them and smashed into the wooden walls behind them. He saw the open door and crawled in, and the door closed behind him. Bullets were still hammering at the heavy walls, some of them penetrating.

Some one struck a match and Olowga saw the prisoners, the more than a hundred man-things. They were lying flat on the floor, passing the rifles back from the open crates. Others had opened the ammunition boxes and were passing down handfuls of bullets. In that same flare of light—Abbott was holding the match—Olowga saw several dead man-things, and the other gorillas nearby, and he heard their voices as they saw him, crying to him.

Abbott called to Olowga: "Get the others! We're getting out!"

Then it was dark again and he heard the man-things talking, their voices loud over the shooting, and when another match was struck a voice called: "Ready now, *m'sieu*!"

Abbott was beside Olowga now. "To the back of the barn!" he cried. "Tell

the others to follow you!"

Lying flat on his belly, Abbott reached up and pushed the barn door open. Numerous forms were outlined against the house lights on the verandah and in front of the forms were repeated streaks of fire. The shouting increased until it was drowned out by the noise of approaching motors, and the gunfire grew heavier as more man-things arrived.

Suddenly, right beside him, Olowga heard a deafening blast as the man-things in the barn fired a volley into the verandah. Half the forms in the light fell from view. The screams and groans that followed the first volley were lost in the thunder of the second volley, and in another instant, a third.

For an instant there was complete silence in the heart of the camp and the only sounds came from its periphery. A single, low-pitched scream wailed, and in that moment Abbott was on his feet and out of the barn, followed by some ten man-things. Directly behind them was Olowga, calling to the other gorillas to follow.

Olowga ran to the back of the barn. The other man-things had broken away in different directions, but Abbott was waiting there. He stood listening and the gunfire started again from other sides. There was another volley from the barn and they heard the sounds of men running out and voices shouting, and all at once a machine-gun opened up, then a second. A new light swung into line, but an instant after it had thrust its beam, it was shattered, and then one of the machine-guns stopped. Olowga understood: it was the other man-things who had run out with Abbott. They had scattered about the camp and were sniping.

"They can't get out!" Abbott cried. "They're trapped inside!"

LOWGA, standing there dumbly, felt the pain in his left arm. It was hanging uselessly at his side. He had done everything the man-thing Abbott had told him and now—but at this point he heard the strange cry from the fields—the voices of gorillas! He had forgotten about them!

"What's that?" said Abbott.

Olowga lifted his head and let his voice out in a long, hollow call, and the sound silenced everything for a moment. Then Olowga said, "My friends are returning to the place where the girl wants. I am going now to get Devoli."

"Wait!" said Abbott. His face, drawn and tense, was turned to the field, and nothing of the chaos that surrounded him seemed to have any effect on him. His arms hung at his sides as if weighted by the guns in them. Then, when he turned to Olowga again, he winced as a bullet whined by, as if he had not heard the sounds before.

"We'll never get away now, any of us," Abbott said hurriedly, "unless we try something. Send one of these . . . of your friends here to the others. Tell them to bring the girl and to come to the far end of this east field where all the planes are. Tell them to come to the grove of trees at the far end. And when you get Devoli, bring him there—"

"It is safer in the jungle—"

"You'll never get to the jungle alive! They'll hunt you down with their patrols—it's too far to the jungle and it'll be daylight in half an hour. But if we get to the east field, we can steal one of their planes and I'll fly us out! Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"And tell these friends of yours here to stay with me, so that you will know where to find me later. Tell the one

you send now to let the others know that I will be there, that I am your friend."

"Yes," said Olowga. He turned to Weygu and grunted to him, then to the others. When he had finished he saw that Abbott had seen that his arm had been hit, that he could not move it. The pain had become a constant, numbing thing, and he scarcely felt the blood dripping down from his fingertips. The gunfire and the voices and the steady hammer of bullets had always existed; they meant nothing any more.

"You've been hit," Abbott said.

"Go now," said Olowga. He mumbled to Weygu, and Weygu turned and ran crouching through the field. Then Olowga peered ahead and without a word he edged back around the barn.

He went back halfway to the front, then dropped down and crawled to the next shed. There he could see the place he had just come from, and Abbott and the others were no longer there. He lay quietly and heard the voices of man-things moving surreptitiously into the shed. They were going to open fire on the barn from the side. The man-things that Abbott had been so determined to rescue were lost. The new snipers who had gotten out were still doing their work, but as the scattered forces of the Germans came back, and in daylight, it would be over soon.

Olowga crept behind the shed. He had been thinking clearly all the time Abbott was with him, but now it was becoming difficult again. He remembered everything—that Weygu would tell Jagga and the others to bring the girl to the grove at the far end of the east field, the same grove where he had first seen the girl the day the Major showed him the strange machines. There he would bring Devoli, and then . . . but how was he going to get to

Devoli? His task was easier now because the man-things in the house were distracted.

He would circle the camp, going from the shed to the largest shed and then to the wing of the house. . . . A small group of man-things ran by a few yards from him, going to the back of the barn. But the sounds of the shooting had changed. It would grow intense and steady and then stop and come from a new direction, but never from the direction of the house. There were no voices now, but only the rumble of motors as new men came in. Soon the prisoners in the barn—

SUDDENLY there was shooting from the back of the barn. He looked up and saw the man-things he had seen going there. They were running into the field, and rifle fire cut down three of them. The man-things in the barn had made openings on all sides. They were surrounded, but they could not be approached closely.

He started for the largest shed, but the wind changed a trifle and he caught the odors of many man-things there. He crouched lower and circled it from the field, coming in at the end of the new wing. He went along the wall until he found a window, then he jammed an elbow into the screen and leaped up through the window.

He stood very still now. The shooting had stopped altogether. When he listened he could hear many quiet moving man-things, and subdued voices, and motors and mechanical sounds. The east end of the horizon was catching fire now. Was that why the shooting had stopped? Were the man-things in the camp going to wait for daylight?

Olowga went out of the room, into a hall, then upstairs. There was no one in the house. He went into a room,

opened its screen and stood on the sill. He reached up and caught the ledge with one hand and judged the faint outlines. Then, holding tight, he raised a foot behind him and pushed against the side of the house and he sailed through ten feet of space, landing on the sloping roof below. There he found the window he had used earlier and dropped quietly into the room.

Somewhere downstairs there was movement, then voices, but nothing he could make out. A door swung open and closed, then footsteps and more voices, then the door again, very quietly. Suddenly he could understand why there had been no shooting from the house. The barn door faced the house, and if the man-things trapped in the barn opened their door, they could rake the house with fire. That meant that scarcely any of the other man-things dared to remain in this house. . . .

He went into the hall. The dead, mangled bodies of the soldiers he had killed were still lying there. If they had been discovered, no one had had the time to remove them. They lay there grotesquely, some with their eyes open, the blood in clotted pools on the walls and floor, stiff and awkward and broken. Olowga walked through the tangle of their bodies and a queer tingle went through him.

The silence was like something alive, watching him. Again the door opened and someone came in. Standing at the head of the stairs he heard the new voice—it was the Major! Olowga heard a few words that were too faint to understand, then stepped down and lowered his head to the banister. He saw the Major's form toward the back of the room, in the darkness, two others with him, then the Major went down the hall and went into another room and the two others waited.

The desire to kill surged through

him, but over it was the knowledge that he had to get Devoli. The end was in sight. Everything was in his favor now—the silent camp, the empty house, the last remaining shreds of night. He crept down the stairs. The bottom ones creaked under his weight and the men in the room turned sharply, but Olowga was lying flat on the floor.

A faint light was shining behind the two men; it came from four or five tiny, illuminated buttons on a large machine. The machine was humming now and making soft, sharp little noises—*da-da-daaa-da-daaa*—and the men were listening to it, their hands spinning dials, and one of them writing in the diffused light.

Olowga inched along the floor, dragging his wounded arm. Now and again he would feel everything begin to spin around him, as if his great strength had dripped out of the wound with his blood, but it passed if he remained still. He could see the men clearly now, their backs looming up before him. He could not get to the hall without passing them. Slowly, very slowly, he started to raise himself, first on one knee, then up, up, until he was directly behind them. He stretched his right arm out and waited, and then the two man-things came closer together, close enough. Olowga reached forward and brought his arm around their necks like a noose, pressing them to him, their heads close together, strangling them slowly with the strength of his forearm. . . .

ALL through the two minutes he stood there the machine kept saying *daaa-da-da-daaa-daaa*, and the little buttons winked on and off, and the desperate, boarse sucking sounds of the man-things grew less and less until their bodies slumped in his grasp. He

let them down quietly to the floor and went down the hall to Devoli's room. He opened the door. There was no light inside. No sound came from within.

He was about to step into the room when the door directly opposite Devoli's opened and the Major came out. He took a single step into the hall and saw Olowga. He stopped in his tracks, standing with one foot before the other, then he drew the leading foot back and turned slightly, so that he faced Olowga, and he started to back against the wall but stopped himself and stood there. The light from the room from which he had just come streamed into the hall, lighting up one side of his face. It was haggard and aged and uncertain. It had been that way before he had seen Olowga.

He wet his lips and said to Olowga: "It's you."

"Yes. I've come for Devoli."

The Major turned his head toward the still chattering machine, as if he had just remembered the men there, but he saw nothing. He turned back to Olowga and said, quietly, "I've been looking for you. I wanted to tell you . . ." His voice cracked and dried within him. "To tell you," he said again, "that Devoli is dead. Abbott killed him. . . ."

Olowga heard the words, but they meant nothing to him. He kept looking at the Major. "I am taking Devoli with me," he said, and the sound of his voice seemed distant to him. He saw the words he had just spoken as if they were tangible objects. They were huge letters of some solid matter, hanging in air, spelling out *I am taking Devoli with me*, but as he kept looking at them he could not read them, and they became transparent and he could see the Major's face behind them, glazed, as everything had become glazed. And then the

letters began to turn and take each other's place, moving quickly, erratically, then all whirling together and turning to smoke, until there was a furious vortex before him. It stopped spinning slowly and the smoke thinned out and spread everywhere, and everything was covered with a fine, grey mist. . . .

Olowga saw his arm reach out and grasp the Major's clothes, and he pulled the Major with him as he backed into the room. And all this time the Major had been talking.

"Abbott escaped during the night. We caught him in Devoli's room after he had killed him. He murdered him because he wanted the girl for himself. He knew Devoli was planning the operation and he was afraid you wanted the girl. He killed Devoli. There was nothing we could . . ."

Olowga had come to Devoli's bed. Through the covering mist he saw the still figure lying there, its face covered over with a sheet.

"Devoli," said Olowga, "I've come for you."

BUT there was no answer. He was asleep. Olowga let go of the Major and touched the still form, touched it ever so gently. Then he pulled back the sheet and looked at the relaxed face. In the darkness everything had receded. There was no longer this room. There was only Devoli and he. . . .

He touched Devoli's face, and his black, gnarled fingers withdrew. "*Maganu*," he whispered, to himself. *The final sleep.* Yes, that was it.

Somewhere, not far away, he heard the choking sob and felt his body racked. He fell to his knees beside the bed and the pain in him was like nothing he had ever known before, and he was beating his fist against the floor with all his strength, as if the hurt there

would help take away the hurt that was in him. And then he knew that the sobbing was his, and he heard himself crying softly, uncontrollably. . . .

"Abbott killed him. He wanted the girl. He thought that after the operation he would lose her to you because she loved you. We were too late to stop him. He murdered Devoli."

The voice had never stopped speaking. It said the same words over and over, the man-thing's voice. . . .

And then something within Olowga snapped. Something happened to his brain, and the sorrow and pain were gone. When he stood up again there was a storm in his brain, a murderous, hysterical fury. The man-things had come and killed Devoli. Those who were his friends were not his friends. There was none he could believe. There was nothing now. It had ended for him, but before he was through—

"No!" the Major whispered, frantically. "Don't you understand what I'm saying? I was Devoli's friend—Abbott—"

Olowga brought his fist down on the Major's face. The Major was hurled across the room, falling limply against a wall. Olowga went after him, kneeling down beside the inert body. The man-thing was dead, but Olowga hammered at the face, smashing it, breaking its bones, his fist coming down again and again. . . .

The world became filled with thunder suddenly, and fire surged through him like a thousand daggers. He spun about and leaped up only after the man-thing in the doorway had fired three shots into him, and then Olowga had caught the man-thing. He caught the hand that held the gun and pulled it and a horrible scream welled up and he was still holding the arm but the man-thing had fallen over backward and was crawling away, screaming. The shots had brought

footsteps running and more voices. Olowga stepped on the crawling man-thing and kicked him, and then he was down the hall, running across the room to the stairs.

The door opened and shots echoed after him, but he could feel no pain now. He ran up the stairs, through a room to the roof, dropping to the ground and running.

THE fiery eastern sky was turning blue and white, and the fields were

cold in its light. The world was cold and dismal, and far across the east field he saw the grove of trees becoming visible. He saw the great planes standing in various positions about the field, many of them near the grove, and here and there he saw man-things, not many,

The gorilla hurled the major across the room



and all dropped from view as he ran, crouching, dodging the shots that still came from behind him, more of them now.

Thoughts flashed through his brain, even faster, hits of memories and pictures of strange faces and unfamiliar places, thoughts he could not understand. But mostly he thought of the jungle, and he kept seeing it cool and green and quiet, and knowing that he was running from it. He remembered Devoli and he heard Devoli speaking to him and though he wanted to answer, he knew Devoli could not hear him, that he would vanish if he spoke to him.

And then the girl's face came before him, growing larger in his vision until she filled his eyes and he could see nothing. For one pierced instant there was clearness in his brain and he remembered Ahhott asking first about the girl, then not letting him go for Devoli when he had first wanted to, and he remembered Ahhott trying to stop the Major from letting the girl go with him. But before he could try to arrange these thoughts they were lost from him, and he saw huge, towering buildings such as he had never seen, though they were in his mind, as if the remembrance of another existence was struggling to make itself known.

He was Olowga, the creature of the jungle. He felt it in the pounding rhythm of his feet, in the burning pain of his body, in the thoughts of his brain. He wanted to kill, and when he had killed, he and the others would go back to the jungle, to live their lives as they had before the man-things had come.

Suddenly he saw them, and he saw Abbott with them, and then Ahhott was gone for a moment and a great roar went across the field, and he saw the air shimmering before one of the planes near the grove, and he knew that the roar came from the two whirling objects

in front of the plane. He passed by one of the planes and saw the bodies of four dead men, and near another plane two men lay sprawled, facing the grove.

"Abbott killed Devoli. Abbott wanted the girl. He was afraid he would lose her to you. Abbott murdered Devoli. . . ."

There was a steady hammering in his brain, a voice shouting the words over and over, and more voices joining all the time, and the Major standing beside Mogu and Yawwa and then the girl screaming the words to him, crying, wanting him to help her, and Mogu saying that Ahhott had killed Devoli, and the dead man-things, all those he had killed, standing erect and adding their voices, the agony in their voices like the sounds that were coming from him, for he had been sohhing all the while as he ran across the fields.

HE WAS no more than twenty yards from the grove and the plane when he fell. He saw the earth beginning to slant and when he leaned over to right his halance, it spun around and smashed against his body. He heard the shouting in the grove and saw them come running toward him, and when they were beside him he saw that they were all wearing strange white packets on their backs, that they were held in place by straps over their shoulders and chests.

He pushed them away, crying out at them, wanting no help, and he rose slowly and staggered into the grove, the others beside him. He fell again, to his knees, and he was still on his knees when Ahhott came out of the nearby plane, calling something to him that he could not hear over the roaring of the plane and the voices in his mind. And then he saw Ahhott come up close to him, and he reached out his arm and seized him, falling forward as he did so,

and dragging Abbott down with him.

Slowly he pulled Abbott to him, feeling the struggling of the man-thing, hearing him shout. Abbott tossed about, his hands free, and then he had a gun in his hand, and just as Olowga caught his throat, Abbott brought a hand up and everything vanished as the world exploded, but he felt nothing except that the hand that held Abbott's throat was growing weaker.

But still he held, and Abbott's hand fell limp to the ground, and he saw Jagga and Weygu and the others standing around them, none of them moving, unable to understand, huge, gaunt figures in the half-light and the thunder, and then through them he saw the girl come running and she fell on Olowga, tearing at his hand.

"*Carpenter!*" she screamed. "*Carpenter!*"

And then all the voices in his brain were quiet for an instant, and then they were crying *Carpenter* to him, but he would not release his hand . . . but there was something before his eyes now . . . a face . . . from the most remote regions of his mind . . . a face . . . and he looked at the picture that the girl held before his eyes and heard her voice, and the one word *Roselle*. . .

He closed his eyes then, but the picture remained and he knew the face. His hand had unlocked its grip, covering his eyes, and when he looked up again, the girl was kneeling beside Abbott and the picture was lying on the ground. He picked up the picture and looked at it through eyes that would not focus, but after a moment he saw the face again. He lay there, his back propped against a tree, staring at it.

He heard nothing now. He was lost in an unreal world. His mind was lucid but far removed, moving among the memories of a life that had once belonged to him. And though no sound

came from him now, he was crying for everything he had lost, but slowly, peace returned to him, because he knew that death was not far away now . . .

FOR the first time he heard the girl's voice beside him. She was quite close to him, but when he looked at her, her face kept changing to the one in the picture he held and he was glad, hoping it would be that way when he died, that he would see Roselle last of all things on earth.

His voice was barely audible when he murmured, "Where did you get the picture?"

But when she started to tell him of Alan Bradford, he nodded his head; he had little time now, and so much to say. "Devoli is dead," he whispered. "They told me Abbott had . . . killed him . . . and I believed it . . ." A sudden thought had come to him, but he said nothing, seeing Abbott come toward him, stopping a few feet away.

"You know the truth now?" the girl whispered.

Olowga nodded, and then the girl motioned Abbott to come closer. "There are men still locked in that camp," the girl said. "Abbott found parachutes in one of the planes. He thought the only way to save them now was to drop you and the others into the camp, where you could—"

He stopped her by a feeble signal with his hand, then he raised his voice to his friends, calling them around him. He understood everything now, and there, leaning against the tree, struggling to speak, he told them what they were to do. He told them how the man-thing would take them into the belly of the great bird, how they would fly with it, how they would not be afraid to leap out because they would float down gently. And after they were in the camp, Weygu would lead them in the

destruction of the man-things. They would open the doors of the large house where so many man-things were and they would not hurt them, but only those who wore the gray clothes.

He spoke softly, sometimes repeating himself, sometimes asking Weygu if he understood. And finally he told them that many of them would enter the final sleep, but that it was good, because they were hunting for friends and because Olowga, the Strange One, told them so. When he was done, he sat quietly.

"Tell Abbott they will go with him," he said to the girl, "and stay with me for a moment longer."

He waited until the other had gone with Abbott, then he said to her, "You called me Carpenter. Swear to me that you will never tell anyone that you knew. No one must know . . ."

"No one will ever know."

He looked deep into her eyes then, and he saw the reflection of himself. He saw his great head and its cruel, powerful teeth, and the wide mouth across the lips of which blood kept dribbling, and he saw his own eyes, small and wondering, as if some inner self could not understand that this was he. Then he took out the picture he had hidden when Abbott came toward him and he looked at it to blot out the image he had seen in the girl's eyes. . . .

AFTERWARD, when she had left him, he remembered that she had been crying, and some of her tears had fallen on his hand. Before the great bird had risen he had been afraid that he would be discovered in the grove by the man-things who had come into the field, shooting at the bird and Abbott and the others. But then the huge bird had roared louder than ever, scolding them, and it had swept across the field and taken to the sky, and the man-things had not come to the grove.

With what little strength remained in him then, he had risen and started south, following the course of the great bird. After it was lost from sight he still heard it, then it returned. He looked across the field toward the camp and saw a string of huge, white flowers blossom in the sky, falling swiftly into the center of the camp, and the bird had wheeled and disappeared.

He was going toward the jungle. He knew he would never reach it, but he wanted to die there, as close to it as possible, in the earth that now belonged to him. He heard the shooting that welled up in the camp, and once he saw many gray-clad figures running across a field, away from the camp, and the shooting had continued.

He was halfway across the east field when he saw Jagga and two others running toward the grove and he cried out to them. When they came to him, telling him how they had fallen like leaves from a tree, how they had killed many of the man-things and let out those in the great house, and how they had turned on those in the gray clothes and killed many of them before they escaped into the fields, Olowga felt at peace.

"Carry me back to the jungle," he told them in their own language, and in those words it meant, "Take me home."

Then, carrying him, Jagga said, pointing to the camp, "Look! The man-things have done as Olowga does!" And when Olowga looked, he saw that the camp was in flames, the fire spreading quickly and reaching for the sky.

In the stillness nothing but the roar and crackle and hush of the fire could be heard. The dawn was up and the fire was orange and red against its quiet blue, and everywhere man-things were running, tiny forms that seemed scarcely to move against the curtain of flame. He heard faint voices, and suddenly,

over them, the full-throated throb of the great bird as it returned, flying low across the field. And then, as if it had seen Olowga carried by the others, its wings dipped once and it wheeled, and dipped again. Then it was gone.

But Olowga heard it long afterward, and his eyes were filled with the image of a face, and the last ebb of strength

in him was still in his arm and his hand, the hand that held a picture. It fell from his grasp soon afterward, and a vagrant wisp of wind caught it and sent it tumbling across the field toward the fire.

They carried Olowga, the Strange One, home.

THE END

The **AMAZING WILD HORSES** *of* **TARTARY**

THE wild horses of Tartary, called Tarpan, are truly strange animals not only from the standpoint of appearance, but also because of their unusually well organized way of life.

They are much shorter than the domesticated horse, being about as big as a mule but possessed of a very stocky body. They are mostly drab grey in color with a stripe down their back from mane to tail. The head is small and the fact that its ears are set far back on the head gives its forehead an arched appearance. Its eyes are besdy, black, and penetrating and its chin is covered with ugly bristles. All of these characteristics give the Tarpan a wild and disagreeable appearance.

But it is the highly developed organization of the Tarpan that has enabled them to exist for so many centuries on the wild and dangerous steppes of north and central Asia.

Leadership and espionage are the two most important parts of the Tarpan organization. The leader of the herd, which always numbers from 300 to 1000 horses, is the commander, protector and highest power in the group. It is up to him to first engage the enemy in battle which he does by rising on his hind legs above the intruder and then coming down with all his force to crush him with his front hoofs. As a reward for his protection, the leader has his choice of the mares in the herd and he reigns in complete command until some other stallion can defeat him in battle and thus take over the leadership.

In addition to the supreme leader stallion, each company within the herd is governed by a lieutenant who acts as leader over his company. These lieutenants have supreme power within their company but they all obey the powerful herd leader. When on the march, the Tarpan move like an organized army with each company moving as a

unit within the entire herd. When they stop to graze they do so in companies with the lieutenants moving about to protect their company while the supreme leader watches over all.

The younger stallions comprise the espionage unit of the herd. They travel outside the regular line, either a little before or behind the herd. When the young stallion comes upon something out of the ordinary, he investigates very cautiously. If everything is all right, the stallion forgets about it and proceeds to follow the herd or graze as he sees fit. If he discovers an enemy, he gives out a shrill neigh that is so blood-curdling and loud that the entire herd hears it and all escape from the enemy.

If, however, the enemy discovers the Tarpan before the spies see him and attack the herd, the supreme leader meets his attack and usually destroys him. In this respect, the Tarpan are like all horses who will avoid a fight as much as possible, but if the fight is forced on him, the horse will prove a worthy warrior and is usually the victor.

Although Tarpan can be captured, they can never be broken and domesticated. They often break their own necks while struggling to get free and when they find they cannot escape, they go on hunger strikes until they die. No one can ride them for when a rider comes near, the Tarpan stands on its hind legs ready to kick the rider with its front feet. If kicking does not succeed, the Tarpan attempts to kill the man with its sharp teeth.

Tarpan have a natural hatred toward all tame horses and at every opportunity they will attack and destroy them. And thus they continue to live, eking out an existence from the limited vegetation of the land, respected by man and beast alike and left pretty much to themselves by both.



THE FISHERMAN

by ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS

Who was this amazing old gentleman? There was something mysterious, yet wonderful, about him

WHAT is your name?" the psychiatrist asked.

When there was no answer, the psychiatrist glanced across the desk. The patient gave no indication that he had even heard the question. He just sat in the chair, where he had been placed by the nurse who had brought him into the room, and smiled. He was a little old man with a shock of white hair badly in need of clipping. His face was a mass of tiny wrinkles in a skin that had the fineness and the clearness of rare old china. But the most outstanding thing about him was his air of benevolent delight. He smiled at the psychiatrist and nodded happily. Otherwise he gave no sign that he had heard the question.

"My name is Jones," the psychiatrist

said. "Ralph Jones. What is your name?"

"My name?"

"Yes. We need it for the records, you know."

"Oh, yes, the records." For an instant the patient looked thoughtful. "Your name is Jones?" he inquired.

"Yes." Unending patience was an absolute essential in such an interview. The psychiatrist had plenty of patience. He needed it in his profession.

"Mine is Smith," the patient answered. "John Smith!" He smiled triumphantly and beamed at the psychiatrist like a child who has come up with the answer to an oft-repeated question and is expecting a reward.

The psychiatrist sighed but he did not let his annoyance show on his face



He was sitting there fishing contentedly

or appear in the tones of his voice. He glanced down at the memorandum on the desk before him.

"I see the police arrested you?" he said.

"Yes."

"For fishing in a park lagoon?"

"That is correct."

"Didn't you know that fishing is forbidden in the lagoons? They are a part of the state system of fish hatcheries."

"They are?" John Smith appeared surprised and pleased. "I did not know."

"Didn't you see the No Fishing signs?"

"Signs?"

"Yes. The signs. Didn't you see them?"

"Signs? Ah, yes, signs. Yes, I saw them. Were they supposed to indicate that fishing was forbidden?"

"Yes." Dr. Jones paused. A thought had occurred to him. "Can you read?" he asked.

"Read? No. Yes—" The patient floundered. "That is, I can read, but I can't." He smiled as if he thought he had made a most profound remark.

DR. JONES was head resident of the city psychopathic hospital and he was beginning to understand why the police had brought this man to the hospital instead of booking him at the nearest station. Obviously the police would think John Smith was psychotic. Dr. Jones was not yet ready to make such a diagnosis, but if the patient was psychotic there remained the problem of determining the nature of the psychosis and of recommending treatment.

"Repeat this phrase after me," Dr. Jones said. "'Around the rugged rock the rugged rascal ran.'"

The patient beamed. "'Around the rugged rock the rugged rascal ran,'"

he said.

"Say, 'Methodist-Episcopal.'"

"'Methodist-Episcopal.'"

Dr. Jones thought: "Probably no impairment of the nervous system. If there was an impairment, he would not be able to repeat those phrases without fumbling."

"It's a game?" the patient smiled. If it was a game, he was eager to play.

"Do you like to play games?"

"Oh, yes!"

"What games do you like?"

"I—" The exultation went out of John Smith's voice. "I've never played. Will you teach me?" Eagerness was in the voice now.

Dr. Jones was silent. He groped for a way to answer the question. "Play—" he thought. He looked out the window. On the lawn outside he could see the warm sunlight on the green grass.

The doctor pulled himself back to the task of making a diagnosis.

"It might be senile dementia," he thought.

He asked, "How old are you?"

"Old?" John Smith seemed puzzled. He was willing to answer, he smiled to show his willingness, but he did not seem to understand the question.

"Yes. How many years have you lived?"

"Oh!" The patient smiled as if he had understood at last. "I'm pretty old," he said. "I don't know exactly how old. I did know, once, but I have forgotten."

"Well, we all forget things," the psychiatrist answered. "We wouldn't be human if we didn't. Where is your home?"

"Home?"

"Yes. Where do you live? You don't mind answering that, do you?"

"Oh, no, I don't mind," John Smith said eagerly. "But you ask the hardest

questions!"

"What's hard about telling me where you live?"

"It's hard because I live in so many places," the patient answered. "I don't live in any one spot. I live—well, I kind of live everywhere."

"You mean you have no home?" Unconsciously Dr. Jones marked "Homeless" on the case sheet in front of him.

"I have a home all right," John Smith answered.

"What street is it on?"

"It isn't on any one street."

"No? Perhaps you live in the country where they don't have streets?"

"I live in the country all right, but I live in the city too."

"You mean you have both a country estate and a town house?" the doctor asked. He felt the question was without point. To maintain a country estate and a town house would require much wealth. He asked anyhow. You could never tell when some psychotic would turn out to be a millionaire.

"I live in almost all houses," John Smith said. "In a way, I guess I own them, but strictly speaking, they are not mine."

"Ah," the psychiatrist said.

HE WAS getting nowhere. He had been unable to establish the identity of the patient, his age, or his place of residence. This was not too unusual. Old people sometimes forgot these things. Senile dementia might result from arterio-sclerosis, hardening of the arteries, which kept an adequate supply of blood from reaching the brain. Without enough blood, the brain simply did not work properly. Dr. Jones was beginning to be more and more certain of this diagnosis. He tried another question.

"What kind of work do you do?"

"I'm on a vacation," John Smith promptly answered. He smiled as he spoke and his face showed almost childish happiness.

"What is your profession?" the psychiatrist continued, unperturbed.

"Profession?"

"Yes. What trade do you follow?"

"Trade? Oh, yes. I'm a god," John Smith said.

Dr. Jones sighed. Upstairs in the hospital was one man who thought he was Napoleon, a second who was certain he was the reincarnation of Genghis Khan. They had one Shakespeare in the hospital and a fair representation of other famous people. Now, it seemed, they were to have a god. He pressed the buzzer on his desk and to the trim nurse who entered, he said. "Will you take the patient to his room? He has a private room, does he not? Good. Keep him there until tomorrow and then assign him to one of the wards."

"Yes, Dr. Jones," the nurse said.

The psychiatrist leaned back in his chair and watched them leave his office. John Smith went willingly with the nurse. She was a neat, attractive girl and the patient seemed entranced with her. The last he saw of them John Smith was smiling fondly at her.

Dr. Jones sat a moment in thought. A soft wind was blowing through the open window. It was a warm wind and it brought with it from somewhere outside the fragrance of blooms. Spring was out there on the other side of the window, with green grass and blooming shrubs and soft warm winds.

"Fishing in the park," Dr. Jones mused. "Well, I can't say that I blame him, on a day like this. I'd like to be out fishing somewhere myself, if I had time."

For a moment he was irritated with the responsibilities of his profession,

which tied him to his desk and his hospital rounds. Then the irritation passed. He pulled the case sheet before him and wrote rapidly.

Name: John Smith.

Address: Unknown.

Age: Unknown.

Tentative diagnosis: Senile dementia, with loss of memory and delusions.

Remarks: Brought in by police who found patient fishing in park lagoon.

"THANK you, my dear," John Smith said to the nurse. "Thank you for bringing me to my room."

"You're quite welcome," the nurse said. She went about the room and with a few deft touches, a pat on the blanket, rearrangement of the pillow, an adjustment of the window shade, somehow made it more attractive.

"You are a beautiful girl," John Smith said. "And very kind, to take such excellent care of an old person like me."

"Thank you," the nurse said. Somehow the compliment pleased her tremendously. She would have liked to stay and talk to this nice old man but other and less pleasant patients demanded her attention.

When she had gone, John Smith inspected the room. There was an air of pleased wonder on his face. It was a plain room, simply furnished, but it was clean and neat, and in spite of its hospital appearance there was an air of restfulness about it, an invitation to repose. John Smith laid down on the bed. He was almost asleep when the visitor entered.

The visitor was big. He almost filled the room.

"Sire?" he said. His voice was polite but firm and there was a rumble in it like the sound of distant thunder.

John Smith sat up abruptly. He

blinked at his visitor, then recognition appeared in his eyes.

"Gabriel! Oh, dash it, Gabriel—"

"You were almost asleep," the visitor said accusingly.

"Well, what of it?" John Smith answered petulantly.

"Sire!" There was horror in the voice of thunder. "You do not realize what you are saying! If you should sleep—"

"Well, let them stop for awhile," John Smith said. "What would it matter if the stars failed to move in their courses? Must I maintain eternal watchfulness? Am I never to sleep, Gabriel, not even for an instant?"

"If it is your will to sleep, Sire—" the visitor said. He left the sentence unfinished.

"Oh, dash it, Gabriel—"

"We will sleep with you," the visitor said. "All creation will sleep with you. Is it your will to sleep, Sire?"

JOHN Smith did not answer. "Go away, Gabriel," he muttered. "I tell you I must have a little relaxation. How did you find me anyhow?"

"With difficulty, Sire," the visitor answered gruffly. His voice was respectful but overtones of annoyance showed in it. "When we discovered you were missing, our first thought was that you had gone to the Pleiades. That was where we found you the last time, Sire, if you remember—"

"I remember," John Smith said wistfully. "A very nice place, the Pleiades."

"We might not have located you at all if a certain police report had not been brought to our attention—"

"Do the police make reports too?" John Smith interrupted. "Confound it, I never thought of that."

"You were fishing in the park, Sire," the visitor said accusingly.

"I didn't catch anything," John Smith said hastily.

"Of course not. If you had caught even a minnow we would have known instantly where you were. I'll wager, Sire," the visitor said triumphantly, "you were fishing without bait."

"Well, what if I was? It's not the catching fish that is important, it's the fishing."

"I am well aware of that, Sire." The visitor pulled a memorandum pad out of his pocket and cleared his throat. "There are certain matters, Sire, that require your attention—"

"Oh, please go away," John Smith interrupted.

"If that is your will, I shall of course do as you desire. But first," the visitor cleared his throat again, this time in a more determined manner, "at 3:20 this afternoon, a new solar system is to be set in motion. At five o'clock, a new star cluster is to be activated. Inasmuch as this will probably require several hours of your time, I have planned no further activities until eleven o'clock, at which time a deputation from Aldebaran will be waiting for an audience with you, concerning the matter of—"

"Oh, dash it, Gabriel—"

"Concerning the matter of adding a new solar body to their system. They are slightly out of balance in that system, due to some error in the original calculations, and they need a new planet to restore the balance. They claim, with some justice, I think, that their inner planet is being drawn into their sun, and that their other planets will eventually follow it, unless the error is rectified. Accordingly they have requested an audience to discuss the matter. However, if it is your will to destroy this system, I shall cancel the appointment and inform the deputation of your decision."

"No, Gabriel, of course I don't want it destroyed. It's almost a new system," John Smith protested.

"Very well, Sire." The visitor closed the memorandum book with a snap and bowed low.

John Smith regarded him with interest. "What are you doing?" he asked.

"I am leaving, Sire. It is customary to bow when departing from your presence."

"Leaving?"

"Yes, Sire. You told me to go away."

"I told you to go away?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Oh, dash it, Gabriel, you know I didn't mean it."

"I am unable to interpret your meaning, Sire. When you express your will, I have no choice except to act in accordance with your desires."

THE visitor's manner was stiff and formal. He did not look at John Smith. His gaze was fixed on the blank wall. John Smith regarded him with fretful interest.

"Gabriel."

"Yes, Sire."

"Oh, confound it, Gabriel, we have worked together for a long time."

"Since the creation of the morning star, Sire. I may add that the work, though arduous, has been pleasant."

"I am glad to hear you say that, Gabriel," John Smith said. The visitor was still staring at the wall and John Smith was still regarding him with fretful interest. "We are old friends, aren't we, Gabriel?"

"I trust so, Sire."

"You trust so? You know we are."

"We have worked together for a long time, Sire."

"And we are friends?" John Smith insisted.

"Y—yes, Sire."

"Then dash it, Gabriel, why do you stand there and stare at the wall like that? Why don't you look at me?"

"If that is your will—"

"Confound my will!"

"Yes, Sire."

"Gabriel," John Smith exploded, "if you say, 'Yes, Sire' once more, I'll—I'll hit you with something. Gabriel, there is no point in you getting your nose hard and putting on that pose of ruffled dignity just because I took a little vacation."

The visitor was silent. His face remained impassive but an interested gleam had appeared in his eyes.

"It was fun fishing," John Smith said defensively. "I haven't been so relaxed in centuries. There is a little nook out there on the bank of the lagoon. It has trees all around it and the birds come down and drink at the edge of the water. It was early in the morning here and the sun was warm and the breeze was cool. I tell you, Gabriel, it was better than heaven, and if those confounded police had not found me—"

"Shall I blast them, Sire?" the visitor spoke suddenly. A frown blackened his brow and tones of thunder rolled in his voice. "Shall I blast them for disturbing you?"

"Oh, no, Gabriel," John Smith said hastily. "They were only doing their duty. No, no blasting. Nothing like that, Gabriel." He paused and looked at the visitor. "Was that all you wanted, Gabriel? Was that all you had to call to my attention?"

"That was all that needed your immediate attention, Sire. If we hurry, we can just reach the new solar system in time to set it moving."

"Oh, dash it, Gabriel."

"If it is your will to leave this new system unactivated—"

"Of course it isn't!"

"Then you will go, Sire?" the visitor said. There was eagerness in his voice and his eyes left the wall. For the first time he looked at John Smith.

John Smith rose from the bed. "Yes, I'll go," he said fretfully.

"Thank you, Sire," the visitor said. Thunder boomed again in his voice, exulting thunder. "I knew you would!"

"You did, did you?" John Smith said. "I've half a mind—Oh, dash it! Well, come on, Gabriel, come on. What are we waiting on? If we must, we must, and that's all there is to it."

THE nurse was badly upset. Otherwise she would not have dashed into the office of the chief resident without knocking. She found him in an important conference with another staff doctor.

"What is it, Miss Thomas?" the psychiatrist snapped. "What's wrong now?"

"I'm sorry, Dr. Jones, but that patient has escaped!"

"What patient?"

"The nice old man. You know—that case of senile dementia you interviewed this morning."

"Oh, yes, I recall it now. You say he has escaped?"

"Yes, I looked into his room a minute ago and he was gone."

"How did he get away?"

"I don't know, Dr. Jones. The door was locked and the windows hadn't been tampered with."

The psychiatrist frowned. One thing about working in a psychopathic hospital, something was always happening.

"Shall I call the police?" the nurse asked.

Dr. Jones hesitated. Since the police were already interested in the case, as a matter of routine they should be informed of the escape.

"What good will that do?" the doctor said at last. "The patient is harmless. The police don't want to be bothered with him. Let him go. There is nothing we can do to help him and anyhow, he probably escaped only because he wanted to go fishing again."

"Yes, Dr. Jones." The nurse closed the door softly as she left.

The psychiatrist thought. "Darn it! I wish I—"

The second doctor, who had listened in poorly-concealed annoyance to what the nurse had to say, resumed the in-

terrupted conversation. "If the diagnosis of the patient in 7-a is confirmed as schizophrenia—"

"Damn the patient in 7-a!"

"Sir!"

"I'm sorry, my dear fellow," the psychiatrist hastily apologized. "I was thinking about something else. What was it you were saying?" He forced his mind back to the channels of duty. With great reluctance, it abandoned the idea of a fishing trip and concerned itself with the problems of the patient in 7-a.

THE MYSTERIOUS ORIGIN OF THE CAMEL

THERE are many odd quirks of nature that we read about every day and the case of the origin of the camel is just one example of these strange occurrences.

We all know that today the camel is found in Africa and the Middle East, but did you know that it originally was a native of *North America*? An exhibit was shown a few years ago at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago which traced the evolution of the camel from prehistoric times as a native of North America through the ages to the present species now found only in Asia, Africa, and South America. Each step of importance in this evolution was illustrated by specimens of skulls, jaws, and feet to show the various changes in anatomy which had occurred.

According to Paul O. McGrew, who prepared the exhibit, camels were found only in North America from the late Eocene to late Pliocene eras, a period of thirty million years. It was on this continent that the camel underwent most of its evolution from a creature no bigger than our present rabbit to the huge beasts found today.

During the Pliocene time, North America and Asia were connected by a strip of land at the Bering Strait. This accounts for the way the camels, along with many other mammals, migrated into Asia. The climate also was milder in this region during Pliocene times which permitted the food so essential for grazing animals to grow and thus sustain the animals during their migration. The extreme cold now found in the north polar regions does not permit much vegetation to grow which would prevent any grazing animals to make the migration in present times even if the land bridge still existed.

The camels which migrated to South America

are not known as camels today, but are called guanacos and llamas. From the beginning of the age of mammals, North and South America were separated by a huge body of water. It was almost at the end of the Pliocene time that the Central American isthmus was formed which reunited the two continents as they are to this day. It was across this isthmus that the camel of North America traveled to South America. The camels migrating southward were different in structure from those going to Asia. The large humped camels migrated to Eurasia and formed the species known today as the Bactrian and dromedary camels. The smaller camels that went south never developed a hump and from them are descended the guanacos and llamas of today.

Of course, all the camels did not desert North America at this time. Many species continued to live here until historic times and the remains of some of these camels found in the United States is thought to be less than a thousand years old. In fact, one specimen uncovered in a Utah cave not so many years ago was so fresh that some of the dried muscle was still on the bone.

However, the camels that did stay in North America disappeared completely before the white man ever reached this continent. How they all died is an unexplained mystery of science. The Indians might have killed them off for food, or they might not have been able to withstand the extreme cold climate brought on by the Ice Age. There is also a possibility that some camel disease spread through their midst and destroyed them. Nevertheless, the camel and its descendants are no longer found on the North American continent, the place of their origin.

—Carter T. Wainwright.



YESTERDAY'S CLOCK

by DAVID WRIGHT O'BRIEN

"I'd give my right arm to live this day over again, knowing what I know now!" How often have you said that?



"The pest is gone," mourned Bellows. "It can't be lived again." The old man looked up. "Ah, but if it can . . . ?"

THE tomato juice tasted foul. The toast was burned and scarcely edible. Someone had undoubtedly done something to the cream, for when it came time to pour it into the coffee, it was slightly sour.

George Bellows endured all this, while wincing his way through the war news in the morning paper. Endured all this and the brisk chatter of Constance, his wife, even though his every instinct told him that this was going to be, but definitely, a bad day.

George Bellows munched his burned toast, took a hasty swallow of his slightly sour coffee, and grimly digested the fact that things looked bleak indeed on the Russian and Egyptian fronts and that the Alaskan situation seemed none too steady.

"And so you see, George," chirped his wife, Connie, with her strange early morning talkativeness, "even though we make a lot of money compared to some of the people we know, we really ought to think of cutting down on our expenses. After all, with this war and everything, we can't be

too certain about conditions. Especially since you are in the advertising business, and everybody knows how badly this war has hit the advertising business."

George Bellows looked up at his wife. He sighed despairingly.

"Look, Connie," he began, "how often must I tell you that—"

"You've told me, I know," Connie began. "We'll get down to brass tacks and save pretty soon. But after all, George, when you consider the fact that there's a war on, and—"

George Bellows cut in on his wife a trifle sharply.

"I am quite aware of the fact that there is a war going on," he said. "But after all, Connie. We ran up a lot of bills, somewhat necessary bills before December eighth. We still have them to clear up before we can honestly begin to save for ourselves. Besides, we're doing quite well. You aren't without clothes—" he looked at his wife's comfortable though sloppy negligee and added, "literally. And we aren't starving. Don't fret so about things. There's enough to worry about these days without additionally straining yourself!"

Connie Bellows, an attractive, well-meaning, though scarcely economical wife, looked injured. She threw back her pretty blonde head indignantly and sniffed.

"I was just trying to be helpful," she declared tartly.

George Bellows laid the paper down very carefully. He was a dark, bronzed, masculinely handsome chap in his late thirties. He had eyebrows which were capable of registering infinite sarcasm. Now they did so.

"You really do try very hard, my dear," he acknowledged frostily. "It's such a pity that your best is none too good."

Connie Bellows looked at her husband, George, open-mouthed in shock and flustered anger.

"Is that so?" she demanded in rising accents.

George Bellows picked up his newspaper.

"I am afraid it is," he said. He turned to a perusal of the grim Russian situation.

Connie Bellows rose, planking down her coffee cup indignantly. Her gray-green eyes were sparking danger.

"You—you," she struggled, "you unappreciative beast!"

SHE turned and left the room wrathfully. George Bellows heard her mules clicking as she ascended the stairs to the bedroom, but his eyes returned to the paper. Connie was a nice kid, a cute trick, a fine wife. But she was an impossibly bungling, though eager, financial manager. George Bellows had never minded this fact. But he did mind her occasional outbursts of economy in which she tried to pin all the blame on him for their not having any reserve capital.

"Have dinner ready at six-fifteen!" he called after her callously. "I'll be home then."

There were days when George Bellows, on having thus wounded his well-meaning wife, would follow her to the bedroom and console the inevitable tears that followed such a battle. But this was not one of them. This was a day in which he drank foul tomato juice and munched burned toast between swills of sour coffee.

This was a bad day.

George Bellows contemplated his problems, sandwiching them in, so to speak, between the infinitely more important issues facing him from the black type in his morning paper.

As Connie had stated, the advertising

business, of which George was a part, was none too solid these days. What was there left to advertise? Too, although his job as a copywriter in a fairly secure agency paid him rather well, George Bellows—always easy-going and seeking a good time from life—had never bothered to insist that Connie build up a nest-egg against some calamity.

The war had caught the Bellows flat-footed. Like innumerable other persons they had not expected it—at least so soon. They had arranged their living schedule quite along business-as-usual standards and had even been so unfortunate as to indulge in a buying spree for things for the house shortly before the United States became involved in the grim conflict.

Thus it was that this rosy summer morning found the Bellows in the position at which Connie had somewhat vaguely hinted. George Bellows had a good job in a shaky business. But the Bellows' finances weren't cached in banks, due to bills still pending. And the only money on which they could count at present was the rather comfortable stipend he received from week to week.

It was not an impossible situation, however. There seemed no likelihood of George Bellows losing his job. And once the bills were cleared up, saving would be a simple thing—if kept out of Connie's hands.

And so it was that this rather crystal clear picture of the situation, plus the burned toast, the sour coffee and the foul tomato juice, made George Bellows a trifle irritated that morning.

It might have been his morbid interest in the bad tidings from Moscow, or merely his defiance of his wife's gloom casting, which kept George Bellows a bit longer than usual over breakfast that morning.

AT ANY rate, when he finally looked up from his paper—some fifteen minutes after Connie had stamped upstairs—he realized with a start that it was almost twenty minutes till nine o'clock.

George was due at the advertising firm of Barton and Biddle at precisely nine. For that was where he was employed.

Hastily he rose, starting wildly for the living room, where Connie had undoubtedly left his hat somewhere out of reach.

Being late to work, before the war and the grim result on the advertising business had taken over, had never bothered George Bellows. As a talented and much-needed copywriter in Barton and Biddle he'd more or less grown used to getting to the office anywhere around ten. But that had been before December eighth and the death knell it rang in George's business. Now things were different, and George hopped for his job like a copy cub.

Cursing, Bellows finally found his hat. And when he'd piloted his car from the garage, he swung around the next corner on two wheels and roared recklessly into the rather thick stream of Sheridan Road traffic headed loopward.

It generally took half an hour for George Bellows to get from his north-side home to his Michigan Boulevard office. And now he was faced with making the journey in—he looked at the clock on the dashboard—but half that time.

Consequently, he took a few chances in his dash toward Chicago's loop that morning. He did a considerable bit of weaving which motorcycle policemen would have frowned upon. But he made time, and reached Foster Avenue where it joined the Outer Drive after but seven minutes driving. Reached

Foster, and started to turn left, only to find that the Outer Drive—due to construction going on—had been blocked off.

"DETOUR!" said the sign, and so George Bellows and the rest of the motorists in the stream of traffic were forced to comply. Forced to comply at considerable sacrifice to speed.

George Bellows cursed most fluently as he followed the definitely retarded traffic along the usual Sheridan Road run toward Lincoln Park.

"I'd have made it," he told himself. "Dammit to hell, I'd have made it—if it weren't for this detour!"

The red-lights were especially irritating to Bellows, who was all too well aware that he would have encountered no such hindrances had the Outer Drive been open. He followed Sheridan Road's leisurely winding route with increasing impatience.

Then at Sheridan and Broadway, Bellows once again encountered the grim sign, "DETOUR!" It meant that he would have to follow the cobblestoned pathway of Broadway, this time.

The profanity of George Bellows was, at this juncture, the devil's own poetry. Broadway was infested with rocking, lumbering streetcars, which were a nightmare to any motorist, a headache to any unfortunate streetcar passenger.

And now it was jammed with traffic usually destined for Sheridan Road or the Outer Drive, plus its regular stream.

As George Bellows shifted gears from first to second again and again, laboriously making his way along this clogged, extraordinarily sluggish street, he had gruesome mental visions of the expression of Homer Barton, his boss.

"Late, eh, Bellows?" George could hear Barton's nasal intonations.

"Late, eh?"

The implications of that phrase were enough to send Bellows into a cold

sweat. "Late, eh?" could mean anything from, "Watch your job in these times of stress," to, "Draw a month's pay in advance," in the present scheme of the agency's attitude.

And it was over just that phrase that Bellows was shivering when the red, stop-light just ahead of him at the intersection was advertised in advance by a yellow light.

UNDOUBTEDLY the worry of George Bellows was one of the causes which made him jam his foot hard on the accelerator when he saw the slowlight flashing from the post at the intersection. He had been worrying about his being late, and acted instinctively when he saw the sign of something that would hold him up even longer. And as he jammed down hard on the accelerator, his automobile shot recklessly across the intersection just as the post at its corner turned from warning yellow to definite-stop red.

George Bellows' automobile hit the precise center of the intersection at the same instant as a heavy beer truck traveling at an exact ninety degree angle. The collision of both vehicles was more or less inevitable.

The crashing tumult of the accident was still roaring in Bellows' ears when his car slid screechingly to a stop at the curbing of the intersection. He knew, without looking around, that the accident had caused considerable damage, none of which had been suffered by the monstrous beer truck.

And then, mechanically, Bellows was climbing out of his car, the screeching of automobile horns and the shouting of spectators loud in his ears.

One glance at his machine showed Bellows all too clearly that the entire rear of it had been pleated in almost accordian fashion. Pleated so thoroughly that it seemed unlikely it would

ever be of use again.

A sudden sick nausea gripped George Bellows. Where in the hell could he ever get another car now that the war was on?

The driver of the beer truck—which had apparently suffered but minor damages on the bumper—had climbed down from his roost high above its huge hood.

He was a round, squat little man of much girth and sinew. He had a shaven head and small, piggish, angry eyes. He advanced on George Bellows, spurred, perhaps, by the spectators surrounding the scene.

"Okay, buddy," snarled the driver of the beer truck quite belligerently, "whatta yuh gotta say fer yuhself?"

Suddenly the pent-up emotions of George Bellows flowed forth. There had been the tomato juice, the burned toast, the sour coffee, Connie's economy prattlings—and now the loss of the last decent car he'd be able to get his hands on.

George Bellows strode swiftly toward the pig-eyed driver of the beer truck, not thinking in terms of the girth and sinew of the chap.

"You bald-pated blockhead!" George Bellows yelled. "Who do you think you're snarling at? Why didn't you look where—"

That was as far as George Bellows got.

HIS hot outburst was cut sharply and efficiently by the sudden presence of the bald-pated blockhead directly in front of him, and the swinging of said blockhead's hard right fist.

The punch caught Bellows on the mouth.

It made his head ring and his knees crumple. It landed him flat on his back in the middle of the cobblestoned street, with a mouth full of blood and horribly unfirm teeth.

The spectators screamed approval which came but dimly to George Bellows' ears.

Groggily, Bellows was trying to climb to his feet. He almost succeeded until another chopping right hand came out of the fog to smash with an agonizing crunch against the side of his jaw. George Bellows sat down hard in the cobblestoned street once more. And again, but more dimly this time, there came to his ears the boots of a crowd.

This time instinct kept Bellows from trying to rise. And the intervention of instinct, plus a sudden dreadful nausea, held him where he was until a voice apart from the hooting crowd broke through the fog.

"Come on, get up wit yez!"

George Bellows blinked dazedly and realized that a red-faced person in a blue uniform was bending close to him and glowering with a great deal of belligerence.

Sickly, aware this time that he had the help of Law and Order, George Bellows endeavored to rise. The first effort failed, but the second, thanks to two beefy paws under his arms, succeeded.

He stood there swaying, holding his mouth with one hand and his splitting skull with the other. The hooting crowd had silenced almost entirely, as all ears strained to catch his first words.

"What do yez mean driving whilst dhrunk?" demanded the man in the blue uniform. He was a policeman.

"I'm not drunk," Bellows muttered thickly between puffed lips.

"Then why are yez running through the red-light, and why are yez insulting this upstanding driver of the beer truck?" demanded the red face and big mouth of the policeman.

"The light was yellow, not red," Bellows mumbled, hand still over his bleeding mouth. "And I didn't insult this

beer truck driver. I was—"

"Niver mind what yez was!" snapped the policeman. "Yez should feel grateful yez didn't kill any young childrun with yer reckless drunken driving!"

"I'm not drunk!" groaned Bellows. He still didn't dare remove his hand from his mouth.

The officer turned from Bellows to the obviously delighted driver of the beer truck.

"Do yez have this fella's number?" the policeman demanded.

"Sure," said the driver; "the louse!"

Horns began to hoot impatiently in the line of cars delayed by the accident. The policeman glared over his shoulder at them. He turned back to the beer truck driver.

"Yez'd better move on," he advised. "I'll handle this dhrunken mince to little kiddies."

The driver went regretfully back to his beer truck. George Bellows found a handkerchief with which he began to wipe the blood from the corners of his swollen mouth.

"I oughtta run yez in fer reckless driving," said the policeman belligerently. "But yez seem to have had yer lesson in the loss of yer machine and the desarving clout on the mouth. Now git that junk offa the corner!"

BELLOWS watched the policeman turn away and stride to the center of the snarled traffic. Sickly, Bellows staggered back to the wreck of his machine. He climbed in behind the wheel and tried to start the motor. There was no result.

Bellows was climbing out of the machine when the squad car from the Accident Detail arrived with sirens wailing. Two uniformed policemen spilled out of the squad and came directly over to Bellows.

"You own this wreck?" one asked.

Bellows nodded.

The uniformed copper produced an accident report book and pencil.

"Look, officers," Bellows implored, "I'll call in, or come to your station to-night with a full report. I'll have a tow truck pick up my car. But I'm late for work already, and I have to rush."

The officer with the notebhook glared at Bellows.

"Not so fast, huddy," he snapped. "You aren't going nowhere until we get this report made out."

"But—" Bellows began.

"Hold your pants on, huddy," the second copper said. "This isn't gonna take long. Besides, if your boss is sore, you'll have a good excuse."

"Very well," Bellows sighed despairingly. . . .

CHAPTER II

THE accident took better than fifteen minutes to fill out. Fifteen minutes added to the ten minutes consumed by the accident itself and the one-sided battle with the truck driver added up to twenty-five minutes all told.

It was precisely twenty minutes after nine when George Bellows left his smashed car and the scene of the accident and started for his office by cab.

Another ten minutes went by before he arrived at his office. And when he stepped into the big front bullpen of the Barton and Biddle Advertising Agency, it was some two minutes after nine-thirty.

Bellows nodded to the switchboard girl and other assorted stenographic help as he made his way through the bullpen to his own private office.

He had his hand on the door of his office, when he heard the voice of Homer Barton, his boss, directly behind him. A cold, quiet, precise voice.

The voice said exactly what Bellows had expected it to.

"Late, eh, Bellows?"

George Bellows, flushing, turned to face his boss. A half hush had settled over the bullpen as the stenographic department bent all ears to hear the star copywriter get told off.

"Yes," George Bellows said. "Yes, Mr. Barton, I'm afraid I am. I had a little—"

That was as far as Bellows got. Homer Barton grabbed the ball and ran the conversation out to a touchdown from there on.

"Bellows, this office has no place for tardiness or negligence with business as bad as it is these days," Homer Barton snapped. "It is the duty of every employee of this agency—no matter how important he may feel he is—to be more than on his toes in such trying times. . . . Arriving to work in such a leisurely fashion as this tends to disrupt the morale of the entire working force here. I find it hard to countenance, Bellows. You are not so important around here that you can—"

At this point George Bellows, acutely conscious of the fact that he was getting this tongue lashing in front of the entire office staff, cut in crimsonly on his employer.

"If you would let me tell you what happened—" Bellows began.

"What happened is of no immediate concern, Bellows. Possibly you overslept. Possibly you just didn't feel like getting down until now. In any event—"

And at that instant George Bellows blew his top. Everything that had happened to make this a definitely bad day, from the moment of the first sip of foul tomato juice until this present humiliation, exploded into red rage.

"Damn you, Barton!" Bellows shouted. "Shut up before I push your

fat little face in for you!"

There was an immediate shocked silence throughout the office. Homer Barton, eyes bugging, pink cheeks growing white, stared aghast at Bellows for an instant. Then his thin lips went tight in white satisfaction.

"Draw your pay, Bellows," he said icily. "You can have the usual month in advance allowance, also. Then please get out of this office for good."

George Bellows glared at his boss for an instant, the red rage still with him. He clenched and unclenched his fists, then decided hitting that smug face of Barton's wouldn't help any. He turned on his heel.

"That's quite all right with me, Barton," Bellows grated. . . .

HALF an hour later, George Bellows sat at his favorite, near-the-office bar. He was minus one automobile, one boss, and one job. Bitterness and sick apprehension and brandy filled him with a sort of numbed buzz.

In his pocket Bellows had eight hundred dollars. A month's dismissal pay in advance, plus the two week check that had been due that day.

"Give me," Bellows told Mindy, the bartender, "another brandy and soda."

Mindy went to prepare the drink, and Bellows returned to his gloomy contemplations. For the twenty-first time he told himself that this was it. This was the dire calamity about which Connie had babbled at breakfast this morning. No job, and nothing to his name but the money in his pocket. Just enough money to carry them along for a little better than a month in the style to which they'd adjusted their living.

Bellows was a good copywriter. A fine copywriter. But advertising was shot to pieces, and agencies were just hanging on to the men they had. They

weren't hiring new writers. Sickly, Bellows realized this.

Of course there were newspapers. He could get a newspaper job. But it wouldn't pay him as well as the one he'd had, and besides, he hated to think of pounding police beats for fiendish city editors.

Mindy brought Bellows his drink, and he downed half of it in his first gulp.

How, he wondered grimly, was he going to break the news to Connie? How especially, after their exchange of that very morning? Bellows pushed this unpleasant problem from his mind and went back to wishing that he were any kind of a writer other than an advertising copywriter. The advertising writers were the only ones who were having a grim time of all this. News writers, magazine writers, screen hacks, all of them were doing nicely. But he, George Bellows, had to be an advertising writer.

He hated the word advertising for a moment. Then he hated himself.

It was at this moment that Louie the horse-bookmaker came into Mindy's.

LOUIE was a thin, dark, dapper little man who spoke with a New York accent and always wore a boutonniere. Today it was a white carnation. He took the bar stool next to Bellows.

"Hello, Georgie," Louie said affably. "Yuh look as though yuh lost yuh dawg."

Bellows studied his drink. "Maybe I did," he acknowledged. Then he added, "How's your business. Taking the suckers down the line as usual?"

Louie laughed politely at this. "Yeah, sure thing. You know me. The oney bonest bookmakah in the business, Georgie. They bet the bangtails; I pay off. I don't make 'em pick no

wrong nags."

Bellows finished his drink, clamped it hard on the bar and beckoned to Mindy for another. He turned to face Louie.

"Got a race sheet handy, Louie?" Bellows asked.

Louie beamed. "Sure thing." The race sheet came out of the bookmaker's pocket with magical speed. Bellows took it.

"I want to look at Arlington," he said.

Louie waited with bland patience as Bellows studied the lists of the horses and the races. It took a little time, but finally Bellows looked up from the sheet.

"I've had the devil's own bad luck this morning, Louie," he said just a trifle thickly. "In fact, I've had such bad luck that no man could have anymore. That's why I figure the law of compenss—compensations will help me clean you today. I'm bound to clean you out."

"Glad to have yuh try," Louie smirked.

Bellows nodded solemnly. "That's just whash—what I'm going to do." He reached into his coat pocket for his billfold.

Louie looked around with sudden apprehension.

"Come on ovah in the corner," he invited. "We don't wantah place no bets in fronta the world."

Bellows clambered from the stool, and billfold in hand, followed dapper little Louie to a corner of the bar.

Louie brought out a ticket sheaf, held a pencil ready.

"What nags you want?" he asked.

"Only one," said Bellows. "Despair, in the first. It's listed at fifteen to one. What's your price?"

Louie's sharp eyes glittered. "I kin oney pay ten to one, Georgie. I can't

give no track odds, you know that."

Bellows shrugged. "Okay, okay. I ought to know thash—that by now." He opened his billfold. "How much can you cover?"

Louie blinked at the display of greenery. He moistened his lips with his lizard-like tongue.

"I kin covah anythin from one to a thousand; you know that Georgie," he said.

"Okay," Bellows said recklessly. "I want to put seven hundred on Despair."

The little hookmaker's eyes almost fell out. But he scribbled rapidly on a ticket, pocketed a duplicate, and handed the ticket to Bellows.

"Seven hundid smackahs," Louie said. "Hand ovah, Georgie."

Peering slightly through blurring vision, Bellows extracted seven hundred dollars and handed it over to the bookmaker.

"Despaih is your nag, Georgie," Louie said. "You gotcha ticket. Ten to one."

"So you'll owe me seven thousand dollars when the first race at Arlington is over," Bellows declared, pocketing his ticket.

Louie nodded, just a trifle pale.

"Yeah, Georgie, heh, heh. You'll rilly break me if Despaih comes through."

"With the luck I've had," prophesied Bellows, "I can't lose. Better go to your bank, Louie, and get ready."

Whether or not Louie went to his bank Bellows didn't know. But the little hookmaker left with the seven hundred dollars a few minutes later, and Bellows returned to the bar to order some more brandy and soda.

IT WASN'T until an hour later that Bellows began to feel, even through the alcoholic haze, that his bet might not have been the wisest thing in the

world under the circumstances. And on trying to think back over the sudden unhappy impulse that had been its cause, Bellows began to wonder exactly what in the hell ever prompted him to do such an asinine thing.

Worry has a faculty for serving as a sobering influence. And Bellows' worry about the horse bet which represented seven-eighths of all the capital he had left in the world, soon began to negate the effects to the brandy.

By noon, he was suffering the torments of the damned, and with frantic despair was trying to rationalize himself into a fatalistic frame of mind in order to shrug off his woes.

But it wasn't a successful effort. At twelve-thirty, Bellows beckoned to Mindy the bartender.

"Where's Louie the hookmaker?" he asked.

Mindy went on polishing a glass. "I dunno, George, why?"

"I want to find him, that's why," Bellows said. His voice was a little shaky.

Mindy shrugged. "He's all over, picking up bets and the like. He's generally back in here in the afternoon, though."

"About what time?"

"About three, four o'clock."

Bellows winced inwardly. The race in which Despair was to run, the race on which he had wagered seven hundred hucks, was run before two. If he were going to find Louie and cancel that bet, he'd better get moving. He rose from his stool none too steadily.

"Where do you think there'd be a good chance of finding him?" Bellows demanded.

"Who?"

"Louie," Bellows said impatiently.

Mindy thought a moment. "You might try the corner of Clark and Randolph. He generally picks up a

lotta politicians' bets in fronta the city hall there."

Bellows nodded a brief thanks and left. He caught a cab and told the driver to go to Randolph and Clark. It took ten minutes. But Bellows didn't find dapper Louie on any of the four corners. He wasn't around the city hall, either.

Bellows decided to fight off his mental panic with a drink. He went into the first tavern he found. One drink, quite naturally, led to four more. Immediately after that he stepped into the street again with the very fuzziest of notions as to tracking down Louie. He didn't get any farther than the next tavern.

BELLOWS realized in horror, some half hour and three drinks later, that it was almost time for the race at Arlington. The race on which he'd placed what practically amounted to his soul. The realization came to him through the simple medium of the radio behind the bar, and the announcer's voice that said:

"Well here we are at Arlington, waiting for the starting of the first race."

Bellows looked up from his brandy at the sound of that cheery sportscaster's voice, and his nausea and panic returned.

"The horses are coming out onto the track now," said the announcer, "moving down toward the big starting gate. The crowd is buzzing with excitement as it waits for the opening of today's racing."

"Oh God," thought George Bellows. "Oh God."

"Number one post position is held by Despair," said the announcer. "That horse is ridden by jockey Stan Hemp, and listed at fifteen to one starting price."

There was more from the cheery

raceseide sportscaster, more which was lost in a cloud of sick, bitter remorse as far as George Bellows was concerned.

Dimly, the account of the difficulty entailed in getting all the horses into the starting gates came to Bellows' ears. Dimly, too, the sudden cry:

"They're off!"

Bellows buried his nose deep in his glass, almost as if he were trying to cover his ears with it also. But the announcer's voice came through to his consciousness in spite of this.

"It's Despair, breaking fast," said the announcer. "Despair taking the lead as the horses thunder around the first turn!"

A curious expression came into George Bellows' eyes; he lifted his head from his glass. Something in his stomach was suddenly twice as terrible as the grief he'd felt moments before. It was a pathetic, anguished, dare-I-hope feeling which tore him apart.

"Now in the backstretch," the announcers' voice came through again. "Despair still holds the lead, by three lengths. Coming up fast on the inside, however, is Castaway, the favorite."

Bellows gripped the edge of the bar with his fingers until the knuckles were white. He closed his eyes.

"Despair still in front, only by a length now, as the horses came into the last turn. Castaway still inching up; another horse, on the outside, making a game bid. Other horse is Merrily. And now they're in the stretch, beating down for the finish line!"

George Bellows lived and died a thousand times in the next fifteen seconds. The announcers' voice was now the all consuming focus of every last atom of Bellows' will power, nerve fiber, very being.

"Despair still by half a length. Castaway fading back. Merrily, the twenty-to-one shot, moving up to within a

quarter of a length of Despair. They're nearing the finish line and it's—*Merrily!* Yes, *Merrily* wins by a nose in a tremendous last stretch drive! Second was Despair, third was Castaway. And that's the end of the first race at Arlington Park, run at—"

But George Bellows wasn't listening any more. He'd slid from the bar stool and started blindly toward the door. Like a thumping carnival drum in his brain there came the chant: "Seven hundred bucks. Seven hundred hard earned dollars. Down the drain. Down the drain. Nothing left. Nothing left. Down the drain."

He stopped just outside the tavern door and pulled out his billfold. Carefully, groggily, he counted the money he had left. A little over eighty bucks. George Bellows wondered just how damned drunk a fool could get on eighty bucks.

He decided to see. . . .

CHAPTER III

IT WAS scarcely three hours later when George Bellows, having found a bar, tropical in atmosphere, on the near north side which specialized in zombies, rolled forth for said south seaish bistro on his ear.

Taken under the most rigidly equal of circumstances, zombies are not drinks to sneer at. And taken with the quantity of brandy which had already been consumed by Bellows during his disastrous day, their effect can be most mildly described as sledgehammerish.

George Bellows, through much coy maneuvering, had managed to down six zombies, even though that bistro had a strict limit of two to a customer. With the tactical brilliance given only to drunks and idiots, Bellows had discovered that since the bistro had two dis-

tinct bars and another room distinct from both bars, he could go to both bars and to the third room and have two zombies in each. That he did.

And at his third bar, Bellows found a fast chum. A dark, bearded little man with a long, pointed nose and sharp dancing eyes. The little chum called himself Achmet, which name Bellows freely translated into Allah before their acquaintance was ten minutes old.

In the dark, bearded, politely attentive Achmet, Bellows found the delight of all woe-ridden drunks, a sympathetic audience.

To little Achmet, Bellows related the entire happenings of his undeniably tragic day. And again and again Bellows demanded, with gestures, that Achmet explain the workings of fate against George Bellows.

"Ish not fair, Allah," Bellows protested. "Ish jush like a damn chain tied roun' m' neck by Fate!"

"Fate," said little Achmet quietly, "has a way of being quite unconquerable. One cannot run against its winds, my friend."

This, quite naturally, served to bring out any latent perversiveness in the fogged mind of Bellows. He decided to argue the point.

"Thash not so!" he protested. "All's I hadda do today wash to change a few things I did, 'n everything wouldda been different. I couldda changed it all, if Idda known, and Fate couldn't do a damn thing aboush it!"

At this little Achmet raised his jet black eyebrows.

"You think so?" he asked with a qucer little smile.

Bellows nodded, drunkenly emphatic.

"Coursh I could!"

"Supposing," mused little Achmet, "you had all of today to live over. Do you think you could avert the trouble

you've had?"

Bellows pounded his fist on the bar. "Ubetchal!"

Achmet appeared to change the subject suddenly. "Do you have any interest in clocks, my friend?"

"Wha kina clocks?" Bellows demanded.

"Unusual clocks," the little Achmet said. "Clocks with strange powers over their servant, time."

"Sure," Bellows lied with drunken cheerfulness and a casual wave of his hand. "I'm the orishinal clock bug. I'm inereshted in everything outta th'way. Where'sh thish clock?"

MUCH to Bellows' amazement, the little man reached into his pocket and brought forth a small, curiously designed timepiece not larger than the average pocket watch. It seemed to be encased in a coral substance, and was topped by tiny, delicately carved camels. Its face seemed much like the face of an ordinary watch except that it was sectioned into three circular parts, each of which had watch hands and numerals.

Achmet handed the strange little clock to Bellows.

"What do you think of it, friend?"

"Ish really 'stonushing," Bellows exclaimed. "Whash the three sets of hانش for?"

Achmet smiled, as though he'd expected that question. "One set tells the time today," he said. "The other tells the time tomorrow, and the third tells the time yesterday."

"How ver, ver cleversh!" marvelled Bellows.

"It is the third section that should intrigue you, my friend," said Achmet.

Bellows blinked. "Howsh thash?"

"It tells the time yesterday. When it is set to run for yesterday, it will transport its bearer back twenty-four

hours into the preceding day. In other words, should you wish to try to conquer this woeful day by living it all over again, all I would need do would be to set that third section going and give you the watch."

Achmet's eyes twinkled as he looked up at Bellows.

"Inereshing," Bellows mumbled.

"Yes," little Achmet agreed. "Especially in view of the fact that that is precisely what I intend to do. I will set the little clock"—he took it from Bellows' hand—"for the yesterday section." He peered down at the timepiece, holding it in one hand while his slim, amazingly dextrous fingers tinkered with the third section on its face. Then he started winding the stem gently. He smiled, and handed the watch to Bellows.

"There, my friend. I have set the watch and now it is yours. Precisely at midnight tonight, you will be sent back into yesterday. Yesterday will, of course, be this day, the day you wish to live over again."

Bellows blinked foggily at the watch.

"Don' get it," he mumbled.

"You will comprehend as soon as the phenomenon occurs," Achmet assured him. "Even though befogged temporarily, you will recall all this when you begin this day over again. You are given your wish to relive this day. I, Achmet, wish you luck in your struggle against the fates."

Bellows was still staring uncomprehendingly at the little clock.

"Thanksh," he muttered.

"Now, if you will excuse me," said Achmet.

"Sure, sure," Bellows mumbled. "Ish jush downstairsh onna right landing." He watched Achmet leave, smiled when the little man turned at the door and smiled goodbye. Then Bellows held the watch to his ear, shook

it, shook his head, and pocketed it.

"'Nother zhombie, pleash!" Bellows told the bartender.

The bartender smiled regretfully. "Sorry, sir. You've had the limit of two."

Bellows sighed resignedly and turned away from the bar. It suddenly occurred to him that he'd best look in at his house. The way things had gone this day, he wouldn't be surprised to find it in ashes on his arrival.

It never occurred to him that he was riotously drunk. And it never occurred to him that he had Connie to face in that condition. He found a cab outside the south sea-ish bistro, gave the driver his address.

"And hurry, shee," Bellows demanded. "The plash'sh burning down!"

He sighed and leaned back on the cushions. . . .

CONNIE was waiting for George Bellows as he stumbled up the porch steps searching for his key. The taxi had just roared off, and Bellows was bent over on hands and knees retrieving his billfold, key case and cigarettes when his spouse opened the door.

From the arctic tones of her voice it was obvious that she had watched his uncertain navigation up the walk to the bouse.

"Well!" Connie said acidly. "Pick up your things, drunken bum, and come inside. You'll find it eighty degrees cooler in here, I'm sure!"

George Bellows blinked at his wife, picked up the last of his scattered effects, and got up waveringly from his hands and knees. He essayed a smile.

"Lo, Connie. Look lovely!"

"Get in here!" his spouse ordered.

Bellows weaved into his home, and Connie slammed the door behind him.

"What is the meaning of all this, you snake?" she demanded. And then, before he could answer, she added suspiciously: "Where's the car?"

George Bellows smiled vaguely at his wife.

"Smashed the damn thing up. Didn' like it, anyway. Ran ish shmack inna trucksh!"

"You ran it into a truck?" Connie's eyes were wide, her voice horrified.

George Bellows nodded a trifle proudly. "Never ush car again. All shmash."

"Oh, George!" His wife's voice was a wail of anger and pain.

"Accomplish lotta thingsh today." Bellows weaved there smilingly as he spoke. "Tole Homer Barshun whash he could do wish the damn job. Quit coldsh."

This was not a precise recounting of what had happened. But to Bellows' fogged mind it seemed like an excellently brief manner of imparting everything to Connie without too much wasted words and explanation.

"George!" Connie gurgled the word in shocked, sick fear.

Bellows nodded, still smiling with vague happiness. "Put alla money I collectsh from Barton onna horsh. Horsh almosh won. Ran secun."

"How," Connie managed sickly, "how much money did you put on this—this horse?"

"Sheven hunner dollarsh!" said Bellows with shy pride.

There was a moment of unbroken, electric silence. His wife stared at Bellows utterly aghast, as if she were viewing Bluebeard in Madame Tussaud's wax museum for the first time. Her face was white, and twin crimson splashes of rage marked her cheeks. Her pretty lips were a tight line of frigid wrath.

Her voice was scarcely a whisper

when she finally spoke.

"I'll send someone over tomorrow for my things," Connie said. "I couldn't stand staying in this house another minute. If you ever see me again, it'll be because you scraped up train fare to appear in person at Reno!"

She stepped around him, then, opened the hall door and slammed it shatteringly behind her as she left the house.

GEORGE BELLOWS looked sickly at the still trembling door. He turned and staggered into the living room. As tight as he was, he knew that this was the payoff. This was the final crushing blow of the hideous day.

He suddenly felt very sick, terribly weary, and dreadfully drunk. He peeled off his coat, letting it drop to the floor. Then he bent over, picked out a small object from the pocket of the coat and stared curiously at it.

It was an exceptionally strange little clock of some sort. Drunkenly, Bellows swayed there unsteadily, staring down at the curio. He held it to his ear, then shook his head. There was no recognition, no recollection in his eyes as he stared at the clock. He lurched over to a coffee table and placed the curious timepiece carefully atop it.

Then he slumped suddenly down on the divan. He started to lean back. He felt as if someone were trying to close his eyes. He sat up, fighting off a swift nausea.

Carefully, Bellows bent over and removed his shoes. This done, he leaned back on the divan again, and again it lured him hypnotically. He felt so tired. So damned tired. He sank back wearily.

Minutes later his snores resounded through the room. He was asleep, or, more precisely, was "out cold."

CHAPTER IV

STRONG morning sunlight, pouring into the face of George Bellows, finally succeeded in waking him scarcely two minutes before the alarm clock went off.

For a moment Bellows lay there, blinking appreciatively in the warming glow of nature's klieg lights. Then, suddenly, he sat up in bed and looked wildly around.

In the twin bed beside his own, Connie, his wife, slept peacefully.

Bellows put both hands to his head, closing his eyes. Then he opened them again. Connie was still there. The morning was still sunny, and he was still in his bedroom.

"My God," Bellows gasped. "How did I get here?"

The memory of everything that had occurred in the preceding twenty-four dismal hours returned to him in an overwhelming flood of remorse and sick anguish.

His car smashed, job gone, money lost, wife walking out on him. His sick drunk and his passing out downstairs, all that came to his consciousness.

"But Connie isn't gone," he told himself perplexedly. "She's right here, and I'm in bed, not sprawled on the couch downstairs. I don't even have a hang-over. What's it all about? Could it have been a dream?"

He closed his eyes trying to reason it out. He'd be sick as a dog if he had been drunk the night before. But he felt fine. Connie wouldn't have returned in a hundred years, had she walked out on him. Yet here she was right across from him.

"It couldn't have happened," Bellows told himself.

And yet he could swear that it all *had* happened. But how could he argue against the facts of the present situa-

tion, facts belying all the vividly terrible recollections he had?

"My God," Bellows muttered, "it *must* have been some terrible dream!"

Then he saw the clock, and knowing that the alarm was due to ring in another instant, he reached over and shut it off. Quietly, then, Bellows rose and slipped into a bathrobe.

For a moment he stood there beside his wife's bed, frowning. That dream, that damned nightmarish dream, was still as clear to him as if he'd actually experienced it.

"I'd be willing to swear it all happened," he thought. "I'd swear to it on a mountain of Bibles. Ugh!" He shuddered at the grim recollections that were still with him.

George Bellows then woke his wife.

Connie blinked sleepily, opened her eyes fully, then smiled at her husband.

"Good morning, George. Time to get up already?"

Bellows smiled none too certainly, for the vivid recollections were still persistently with him, and he told her it was almost eight o'clock.

"I'd better hurry with your breakfast then," Connie said. "You start dressing and shaving and I'll have breakfast ready by the time you're done."

Bellows nodded, still bewilderedly unconvinced about everything, and started for his morning shower. . . .

WHEN he came down to breakfast, the puzzled expression was still in Bellows' eyes, and he gazed at the table warily. It was set for him as usual, tomato juice, coffee, toast, a newspaper propped up against the sugar bowl.

Connie came out from the kitchen, smiling brightly.

"You seem strange this morning, George. Anything wrong?"

"No," Bellows said, seating himself.

"No, nothing at all."

Connie took a seat across from him.

"That's good," she declared. Then she began to chatter brightly about innumerable inconsequential things, while Bellows picked up his tomato juice and glanced down at the headlines in the paper.

He had two shocks simultaneously.

The tomato juice tasted foul, and the headline in the paper was the same as he had seen it in his, his "dream"!

Connie, still chattering happily, didn't notice her husband put down the tomato juice hastily and stare in pop-eyed amazement at the paper.

With a hand that trembled visibly, Bellows lifted the lid from the toast tray and looked beneath it. The toast was burned!

It was all he could do to reach for the cream pitcher and gingerly pour a little of the liquid into his coffee. Then after adding sugar, Bellows lifted the cup to his lips.

The coffee tasted like hell, for the cream had slightly soured!

During this interval Bellows had been paying no attention whatsoever to his wife's chatter. Now he looked up at her whitely, and her voice came into his range of consciousness.

"And so you see, George," chirped his wife, "even though we make a lot of money compared to some of the people we know, we really ought to think of cutting down expenses. After all, with this war, and everything, we can't be too certain about conditions. Especially since you are in the advertising business, and everybody knows how badly this war has hit the advertising business."

Bellows' jaw went slack. He gaped foolishly at his wife, while through his mind there ran the phrase, "*This is just exactly as she said it in the dream, if it really was just a dream!*"

Then he said, unaware of speaking aloud: "But it couldn't be a dream, then! It couldn't have been a dream!"

Connie now found it her turn to gape. She looked at her husband in amazement.

"What on earth are you saying, George?"

Bellows was still too white to redden at his wife's words. He could only shake his head stupidly, as if trying to rid it of a fog. Something much more deeply rooted than reason was assuring him that the horrible nightmare he'd experienced hadn't been a dream at all. He glanced down at the paper wildly. Yes, every news story on the front page had been there before him in that so-called dream. And everything else in the pattern duplicated that pseudo-dream, even to the words his wife spoke, the foul taste of the tomato juice, the burned toast and the slightly sour coffee!

George Bellows pushed his chair back from the table and got unsteadily to his feet.

"What's wrong, George?" Connie said in sudden alarm.

Bellows shook his head. "Nothing," he said. "Nothing at all. Just a little groggy. Need some air. I'll take a quick walk."

Connie rose and came swiftly to his side.

"Do you want me to call the doctor, George?"

Again Bellows shook his head. He started for the door, then turned.

"Connie," he said huskily, "how did I come home last night?"

"Why, you weren't out last night," Connie said. "You came home in a cheerful frame of mind about six-thirty. We both sat up and played gin rummy until around midnight. Why? What's wrong, dear?"

"Nothing," mumbled George Bel-

lows, staggering for the door. "I'll be back the minute I get a little air."

OUT in the fresh morning air, George Bellows got a grip on himself. Well, sort of a grip. And after he'd walked half a block, he was able to do a little rationalizing. Rationalizing that included a careful re-summation of everything that had occurred in the "dream" he'd had.

From the re-summation, Bellows was able to recall for the first time since rising, the incident at the south sea-ish night club where there'd been the little Achmet. And then, of course, he recalled the curious little clock.

He remembered, too, the argument he'd had with the little man about fatalism, predestination, and fighting the winds of fate. And he recalled the promise of the little man, after giving him the weird timepiece, that he would be able to relive his nightmarish day.

Bellows felt extremely weak in the knees.

It was preposterous. If there'd been anything a man needed to convince himself that the whole thing had been the poppycock of a dream, it was the mumbo-jumbo of the clock and little Achmet. Such things were utterly impossible.

It was ridiculous, fantastically absurd. Bellows told himself this again and again. But by the time he'd walked around the block and was in sight of his house again, his mind was clear on one thing.

"Impossible or not, ridiculous or not, the damned thing happened to me, and this is my chance to relive this day!"

And so when Bellows reentered his house, he assured an anxious Connie that he felt much better. Assured Connie of that while going into the living room for a look around.

It had occurred to Bellows that he

might find the little timepiece in the living room, the curious clock Achmet had given him. He had left it there. But after a brief, futile search, he suddenly realized that if, as he was now convinced, he was living this day over again, the watch naturally wouldn't be about. He wouldn't even have seen it yet!

Connie, coming into the living room, asked: "Don't you want to finish your breakfast, dear? You'd better hurry, if you want to get to work on time."

George Bellows squared his shoulders grimly. Of course he would finish his breakfast. He would finish his breakfast then set forth to prove to himself and posterity that a man can create his own destiny, given half a chance.

Back at the breakfast table, Bellows looked up at Connie and smilingly said: "Everything tastes swell, kid."

Connie looked surprised.

"Thank you, George," she said a little flatly.

As a matter of fact, everything tasted foul. But Bellows was out to change things. To change everything. He'd started off this day the first time with a fight with Connie. He wouldn't fight with her this morning.

"Yes indeed," Bellows reiterated, "this is a dandy morning snack!"

Connie suddenly stood up.

"Do you have to rub it in, George? Do you have to be so sarcastic? I know the tomato juice is flat. I know something's wrong with the cream. It wasn't my fault the toast burned. And now you have to be nasty!"

BELLOWS, mouth full of burned toast, gurgled astonishedly at his wife as she swept angrily from the room. He heard her mules clicking up the stairs to the bedroom.

He swallowed the burned toast and rose hastily to his feet, thinking of fol-

lowing her to set things right. And then he glanced at his watch.

It was twenty minutes to nine. He'd just have time to make it to work. He couldn't afford to go upstairs and placate Connie. He'd have to let that wait until he got to the office. He'd call her from there.

Bellows found his hat where his wife had hidden it, and dashed to the garage. He was already into the stream of Sheridan Road traffic when he remembered about the trouble he'd encounter at the Outer Drive. It would be blocked off.

It was.

A little sickly, Bellows followed the regular Sheridan Road run along toward Lincoln Park. Mentally he lashed himself for having forgotten about this snag in his haste. Unconsciously, he did a bit of weaving and accelerator pounding in his nervous impatience. Then, of course, he encountered the second detour at Sheridan and Broadway, and was forced along the street car ridden, cobblestoned street. The scene of his accident was approaching, and Bellows began to be aware of it.

He fought back the impulse to sneak off into a side street, knowing that it would only serve to slow him until he was late for work, and knowing too, that he would have to thwart the fate of the accident on his own hook.

And then he came to that corner. The corner where, in the first living of this day, he'd had the smashup with the beer truck. The light, as it had the first time, was changing from green to yellow. Bellows knew he had time to scoot across the intersection before the yellow faded into a red "stop" signal.

Grimly, Bellows smiled.

"Not when I know better," he muttered.

He slammed his foot down on the break pedal, obeying the yellow light to the strictest letter of the law. Ahead

of him, to the right, he saw the big beer truck harrelling across the intersection.

He'd thwarted fate!

And then Bellows felt a jarring impact from the rear. A jarring impact which knocked him forward against the wheel, smashing his mouth on a spoke.

The roaring of the crash was still in his ears when Bellows climbed dazedly from his machine. Sickly he saw at a glance that a streetcar, coming up directly behind him, had been unable to stop fully when Bellows had jammed on his own brakes. And the streetcar had quite thoroughly pleated his automobile, obviously beyond hope of repair!

For a minute George Bellows was too sickly stunned to do anything but gape. Gape and hold a handkerchief to his swollen and bleeding mouth. The streetcar motorman was climbing from his platform.

CHAPTER V

BELLOWS hesitated only an instant.

He knew what a wait would mean. Any time spent in bickering here, or accident reports, would make him late to work. And that would mean his discharge.

He made up his mind swiftly. He could settle about this accident later, somehow.

Quickly, Bellows looked about. He sighted an empty taxi and dashed toward it. He heard shouts of amazement and anger behind him as he ran.

Bellows shouted his office address to the driver, adding:

"Five bucks if you get me there before nine!"

The driver nodded throwing the hack into gear. They roared off, leaving a bewildered motorman, an irate traffic cop, and a hooting crowd of spectators to decide what to do with a

demolished sedan which was tying up traffic.

Nervously, Bellows settled back and lighted a cigarette. He glanced at his watch and frowned. Then he looked out the window, saw the speed and dexterity with which the driver handled the hack, and knew he had a prayer of a chance of arriving at work on time.

At precisely three minutes to nine they rolled up before the office building in which the advertising firm of Barton and Biddle was located. The driver got his five dollars, and George Bellows raced into the building lobby just in time to catch an express elevator.

Bellows entered the offices of Barton and Biddle at exactly nine o'clock. He nodded to the switchboard girl and the stenographic help in the bullpen, making his way toward his own private office cubicle.

And then he saw the boss, Homer Barton.

Barton was moving from the other side of the office to intercept him. Bellows looked up at the clock on the office wall to reassure himself. Yes. It wasn't any later than nine. Barton could have nothing to gripe about.

"Oh, George," Barton's voice came to Bellows. "I'd like to talk to you a moment."

Bellows waited for Barton to reach him. The fat, pink faced little fellow was smiling in sort of a hesitant kindness. Bellows frowned. There was just something in the attitude of his boss, nothing obvious, to suggest disappointment.

"I'd like to talk to you alone in your office, George," Homer Barton said.

Still frowning, Bellows led the way into his private cubicle and turned to face his employer. Homer Barton closed the door carefully behind them and coughed apologetically.

Suddenly Bellows had a horrible pre-

monition concerning the faint evidence of disappointment in his boss' manner. He had the definite sensation that Barton had been waiting for him, hoping he would be late.

"What I have to say isn't pleasant, George," Homer Barton said in his cold little voice. "And frankly, I wish I didn't have to say it to you personally this way."

Bellows watched Homer Barton in a sort of dull fascination. The little man wet his thin lips.

"Our business has been falling off considerably, especially in our radio department. You are our radio copywriter, of course, and so when the necessary, ah, adjustments had to be made in our copy staff it was decided we'd best turn your work over to some of our magazine and newspaper copywriters."

Homer Barton paused to smile sadly at George Bellows, deliberately letting the implication of his words sink in.

"You mean I'm canned?" Bellows said huskily.

"I'm sorry, George. We'll give you the best of recommendations, and a month's pay for dismissal. But it has to be done."

Bellows nodded. "Sure," he muttered. "Sure. Okay. I'm off starting now, okay?"

"That will be all right," said Homer Barton. "You can pick up your check at the switchboard. I had it made out in advance." He extended a cold, damp little hand which Bellows took and shook briefly.

Barton was at the door when Bellows asked: "Incidentally, you were hoping I'd be late this morning, weren't you?"

Little Homer Barton looked at his ex-employee startledly. He flushed a guilty crimson.

"Why of course not!" he snapped. . . .

IN THE more or less well known figure of speech, George Bellows' head was bloody but not quite bowed when he walked gloomily into Mindy's bar some thirty minutes later.

A growing sense of futility, a sort of numbing despair, was beginning to settle on Bellows' shoulders, true enough. His bucking of the winds of fate to that moment had been scarcely successful. He'd altered the course of his day as consciously as he could to prevent the pattern from taking on the same tragic aspects that it had the first time. But in only the minor, inconsequential details had the pattern changed. And now he found himself no better off than he'd been in the first living of this day when he'd slumped dejectedly onto a barstool in Mindy's.

He had eight hundred dollars in his pocket, like the first time, and Mindy was smiling asking him what he'd have, ditto the first time.

"Give me," Bellows said, and then he hesitated. He squared his shoulders slightly, deciding once more to vary the pattern. The first time it had been brandy.

"Give me a scotch and soda," Bellows said defiantly.

Mindy looked at him as if he wondered about the defiant voice, but he went off to get the drink nonetheless. He'd no sooner returned with it, than Louie, the dapper bookmaker sauntered into the place and slid into a stool beside George Bellows.

Bellows looked up, startled, from his untasted drink. Again the pattern was slightly varied in inconsequential detail. When Louie had entered in the first version of this day, George Bellows had been already slightly stewed. Now he was only starting.

"Hello, Georgie," Louie said affably. "Yuh look as though yuh lost yuh dawg."

"You said that before," Bellows said flatly.

"Huh?" The dapper little bookmaker was taken aback.

"Skip it," Bellows advised.

"Sure," Louie said. "Sure."

"How's the horse business?" Bellows asked casually, taking his first gulp of scotch.

"Not good, not bad," Louie replied cautiously.

"That's good," Bellows said dryly; "it's not bad."

Louie blinked and didn't answer.

SUDDENLY Bellows was aware that he would be achieving a supreme triumph over fate if he would just drink and get up and walk the hell out of there. Then there would be no bet, and no loss, and a considerable part of his previous grief would not happen.

Bellows drained his scotch and started to get up from his stool. Suddenly a foolish expression crossed his face, and he snapped his fingers.

"My God!" Bellows exclaimed aloud. "What an ass I almost was!"

"Huh?" asked Louie.

"Got a form sheet?" Bellows asked excitedly.

Louie nodded. "Sure." The racing sheet was out of his pocket and into Bellows' hand in an instant.

George Bellows, excitedly running his hand along the form, felt the first elation he'd experienced since all his trouble began. Elation and sardonic amusement at the boner he'd almost pulled. For he had almost walked out on Louie. Walked out on Louie the bookmaker when he, George Bellows, *through having lived this day before, knew positively what horse was going to win the first race at Arlington!*

What was the name of that long shot that beat the horse he'd picked the

first time? Bellows found it with an excited exclamation, jabbing his finger beneath the name. *Merrily*, that was it!

And *Merrily* was priced at twenty to one.

"Yuh wanta plank a bet?" Louie asked.

"You bet your sweet life I do!" Bellows exclaimed.

Louie nodded toward a corner.

"We bettah go ovah to that corner," he suggested. "We don't wantah place no bets in fronta the woid."

Bellows found his billfold, and clambered from the stool to follow dapper little Louie over to the corner of the bar. Louie had eagerly produced a ticket sheaf and a pencil. He looked expectantly at Bellows.

"How much?" he demanded. "And on who?"

"Seven hundred dollars," Bellows said. Somehow he felt a little more ethical, working on his advance knowledge, in only betting the same amount as before. "Seven hundred dollars on *Merrily*, in the first. The list price is twenty to one. What'll you pay?"

There was the same startled look from the little bookmaker that there'd been before. But then he regained his composure and said, nonchalantly, "I kin oney pay, say, fifteen to one, Georgie. I can't give no track odds, you know that."

Bellows grinned. "All right. Fifteen to one. Seven hundred bucks. That makes ten thousand five hundred dollars you'll have for me, Louie, when that race is over." He added, "Better get to your bank right now."

Louie held out his hand. "If you win, Georgie," he corrected him. "You gotta longshot there. Hand ovah the seven hundid iyon men, Georgie."

Bellows gave Louie the bills, took his ticket in exchange. He patted the

little bookmaker on the shoulder.

"Don't let it throw you, Louie, when *Merrily* romps in."

Louie obviously thought that was very funny. He grinned from ear to ear, like Peter Rabbit. . . .

CHAPTER VI

IT WAS an almost boisterously happy George Bellows who inhaled the fresh, clean air of the lakefront several hours later. An already triumphant Bellows, who had fought fate relentlessly until he had discovered the chink in its armor.

He had left Mindy's immediately after negotiating his magnificent wager with Louie. Left Mindy's, again changing the pattern of his first living of this day. Changing it, so far, in detail only, but in details which would this time mean victory.

He had sought the sunshine and healthful lake breezes in direct and conscious contrast to the routine he'd followed in his first living of this day. Then he had sought only the solace, dubious as it was, of brandy and more brandy.

"Ahhh, but it's so different now," Bellows told himself. "So very, very different."

And so for another hour he looked at the gulls and the lake and the trees and felt quite supremely happy. Finally, his watch told him that it was just about time for the first race at Arlington to be run.

Confidently, Bellows found a restaurant which he sometimes patronized. A restaurant where they always had the day's races blasting forth from the radio.

There Bellows took a seat, noting that the racing program had already started, and the preliminary remarks concerning the first race were already

under way by the announcer.

Bellows somewhat smugly ordered a cheese sandwich on whole wheat and a glass of milk. Then with this definitely unimpeachable repast before him, he settled back to listen.

Everything Bellows had heard the first time was once again repeated by the announcer, so he paid scant attention to the radio until the race was due to start. Even the worry of his wrecked automobile and lost job were gone from Bellows' mind now.

Ten thousand five hundred dollars would keep the wolf quite comfortably from the door until he started at another agency. And as for the automobile, Bellows was quite willing to content himself with the realization that gas rationing and tire shortages would soon make all such luxuries unfeasible anyway.

And so Bellows contemplated his good fortune and waited until the announcer finally came through with his electric words.

"*They're off!*"

Bellows sat forward a little at these words, to be sure. But his smile was bland as the announcer, exactly as he had in the first living of this day, recounted the exciting running of this race.

Despair, as he had the first time, led most of the way around. Castaway, also as before, threatened constantly from the backstretch on. Little mention was made of *Merrily*, but Bellows knew that his horse wasn't due for mention until the driving home stretch when it broke the finish line ahead of the rest.

It was over very quickly. Over just as Bellows had known it would be. Over just as it had been the first time. The announcer was bleating excitedly.

"*Merrily! Yes, Merrily wins by a nose in a tremendous last stretch drive!*"

Second was Despair, third was Cast-away. And that's the end of the first race at Arlington Park, run at—"

Grinning triumphantly, Bellows paid for his milk and cheese sandwich and left the restaurant. He decided to go directly to Mindy's where he could leave word with the bartender for Louie. Word to meet him there later, say at five, with the ten thousand five hundred dollars winnings.

MINDY'S was only ten minutes away by cab, but Bellows, in his mood of exuberant triumph, decided to walk it. He arrived there a little less than half an hour later.

Casually, Bellows ordered a gingerale, and then, just as casually, asked Mindy if Louie had been in.

"Yeah, sure about ten minutes ago," Mindy said. "Which reminds me, be left you this."

Mindy walked over to the cash register and pulled forth a long envelope, brought it back to Bellows.

"He seemed white and shaky about somethin'," Mindy said, handing the envelope to Bellows.

"He should," Bellows grinned. He took the envelope. Louie paid off fast; he had to say that for him. And then Bellows frowned swiftly. The envelope was not a fat bulging thing that might contain currency. Instead it seemed to have only a thin sheet of paper in it. Bellows tore open the envelope wondering if Louie paid by check.

The check was not a check. It was a brief, horribly explanatory note.

"Dear Georgie:" the sprawling scrawl read.

"Don't like to do this, but can't help it. Your dough is down the drain and I don't know how I can pay off. If you're ever in California, look me up."

Yrs. regretfully,

Louie."

George Bellows felt suddenly as if he wanted to vomit. The room seemed to swim grayly around him, and he had to hold onto the bar for support. This was his triumph over fate. This was his so-successfully bucking of an already predetermined destiny. No matter what he did, or how he fought, the pattern could never be changed basically.

No more car. No more job. No more seven hundred dollars. Just like the first living of this day. George Bellows' head was figuratively very bloody, but now it was definitely bowed.

Through the dim fog of despair and sick futility that shrouded him, he heard his voice saying desperately to Mindy:

"Bring me a bottle of brandy. A nice big bottle of brandy. You can skip the soda."

Mindy merely raised his eyebrows. But he brought out the bottle. . . .

EVEN at the start of the bottle, Bellows was conscious of one unshakable fact. His destiny for this day—as it had undoubtedly been for all the days of his life from birth to death—was rigidly patterned, unalterably sealed. There was no fighting it. No bucking the winds of fate.

He'd tried. He'd tried with a thorough knowledge of the bad luck that lay ahead of him, and still he hadn't been able to dodge any of the tragedies he knew to be coming.

And what made it even more terrible was his positive knowledge that the final tragedy of the day was also inevitable. He would lose his wife, to finish the ironically futile battle. There could be no preventing that. Connie, just as she had in the first living of this day, would walk out on him in disgust. Nothing could prevent it. Nothing in the world that he could possibly do.

Staying sober wouldn't prevent it. If he stayed sober some other fiendish complication would step in to carry out the preordained destiny. So to hell with staying sober.

"To hell," Bellows summed it up neatly, "with everything!"

Halfway through the first bottle, George Bellows became squintingly philosophical, and since he was practically the only customer in the place at that hour, he was able to commandeer Mindy's ear.

"Y're licked already, chum," Bellows said carefully, pointing a none too steady finger at Mindy's chest. "Wyncha give up? Wyncha go in fifty-fifty onna gun wi'me? We'll commit sooshide, huh?"

"Now," said Mindy moderately and with practiced tact, "I don't know about that."

"Y'oughtta know," Bellows insisted. He lowered his voice to a confidential whisper. "I know," he hissed.

Mindy smiled tolerantly and lighted a cigarette on which George Bellows had already wasted half a pack of matches.

"Thanksh," Bellows muttered parenthetically. Then: "Y're lucky. Y'don't know y're licked. I do."

Mindy wandered away to fix a drink for a customer who'd just entered. Bellows gravely began a *sotto-voiced* argument with himself. The summation of it seemed to be that the world was the miserable place it was because of small dark gentlemen named Achmet, or Allah, who gave people curious clocks and ruined their lives for them by making them see how futile everything was.

To an outsider, a casual listener, Bellows' self argument would have been scarcely coherent. But to him, it made much sense, especially after pondering it a little longer.

By the time he'd finished his bottle,

Bellows had determined to seek out the swarthy, dark-bearded little chap named Achmet, or Allah, or whatever it was, who'd been responsible for his having to endure this tragic day of proving to himself the futility of struggle against fate.

BELLOWS found a cruising taxi on Michigan Boulevard, and managed to make the general direction in which he wanted to travel vaguely clear to the driver.

Then he leaned back and slept.

Ten minutes later the cabbie and a doorman were shaking him into wakefulness.

"Come on, buddy," the driver said impatiently. "Isn't this where you want to go?"

Bellows opened his eyes a moment to blink around.

"Allah here?" he demanded.

"Pickled to the roots," snorted the doorman disdainfully. "Take him somewhere else; we don't want him here."

The driver shook Bellows again. Again Bellows opened his eyes.

"Listen, Buddy," the driver pleaded, "where do yuh wanta go?"

"Go shee Allah," Bellows mumbled with vague determination. He closed his eyes and began snoring again.

"Look in his wallet," the doorman said. "Maybe his address'll be there. You can take him home."

George Bellows, unconscious of the fact that fate again was bringing him into an inescapable encounter, snored happily onward. The driver shrugged.

"Okay. I don't like to do that. But it's better'n dumping him into the street like this." He proceeded to roll Bellows over to get his wallet. . . .

IT WAS approximately twenty minutes later when the taxi drew up

in front of the Bellows' neighborhood residence. It being late afternoon, the arrival gained considerable attention from most of the block's residents.

With no little effort, the driver at last succeeded in waking George Bellows. And on climbing unsteadily from the cab and blinking in the sunlight, Bellows became aware of where he was for the first time.

He knew he was in front of his house. He knew that he was drunk. And he remembered that he faced the final and by far most terrible tragedy of the day. This was the scene in which Connie would leave him.

Bellows shoved some hills into the cabbie's hand and turned to make his weaving way up the walk. Alcoholically fogged though he was, he sensed that the ancient Roman martyrs must have felt much as he did now when they walked into the arena to face the lions.

He fumbled for his keys as he climbed the porch steps. He dropped his billfold and keys and cigarettes, and was bending over on all fours to retrieve them when he heard the front door open. He looked up to see Connie standing there in the doorway, staring at him aghast.

Bellows retrieved his things, stuffed them haphazardly into his pocket, and swayed back up on his feet.

He felt a foolish grin cracking his mouth, an uncontrollable grin.

"Lo, Connie," he mumbled. "Look lovely."

THEN he navigated the rest of the steps and stumbled past her into the house. Connie still hadn't said a word. Now he heard her slam the door behind him.

He stumbled around to face her, the silly grin still on his face.

"What does all this mean?" Connie asked quietly. "And tell me also what

you've done with the car."

"Carsh smash'tup!" Bellows said. "Shtree'car hit it. N'er be worsha nickle again."

"Oh, George!" Connie gasped.

"I also don' havva job anymore," Bellows hiccupped. "An I losh alla money we got lef onna horsh."

Connie's expression was one of sick horror. Her pretty gray-green eyes were moist, and suddenly twin tears ran down her cheeks.

"Go 'head," Bellows said. "Now leave me. I'ma bum, thash wot. Leam-me 'n get it o'er wish."

And then, to Bellows utter amazement, Connie's arms were around him and she was hugging him tightly and sobbing.

"Oh, George. Oh you poor darned unlucky George. What a positively horrible day you musta have had. Don't think I'm angry, George. I couldn't be angry when you're so utterly down. I couldn't in a million years. You, poor, poor miserable George!"

Dazedly, Bellows let Connie lead him into the living room where she made him lie down on the sofa. He was still too stunned to speak when Connie came back with cold towels and an ice pack.

But the sobering impact of the ice pack and cold towels was nothing as compared to the shockingly sobering impact of Connie's utterly reversed behavior.

"I'm making some black coffee, darling," she said smiling bravely. "You just lie still, and don't worry about anything. It's all going to be all right, honey. You wait and see. You'll find another job, and the car doesn't mean anything. I've a little money I've been saving on the sly. It will tide us along."

Even had he been utterly sober, Bellows wouldn't have been able to figure it out. It was utterly contradictory. Completely, totally out of line with

what had happened the first time. And for no reason. Absolutely no earthly reason.

AN HOUR later when Connie went out to get his third cup of black coffee, Bellows, still beneath the cold towels and the ice pack, was able to figure out the only possible explanation for it all.

"It's simply that she's a woman," he thought, "and there is no rhyme or reason to any reaction of the female of the species. No one, not even Fate itself, can determine how a woman will react from one instant to the next."

And when Connie came back with the third cup of black coffee, the smile Bellows gave her wasn't the least bit silly. It was brimming with apprecia-

tion and the deepest affection man can offer to the one imponderable, incalculable quotient in the otherwise inflexible scheme of Fate—woman.

For he knew that as long as the species existed in the world, man need never fear any predetermination of anything, anytime.

Connie saw the smile, and asked tenderly:

"What are you thinking of, George?"

"Eve," Bellows grinned. "Mother Eve. She certainly threw a rigidly ordered world beautifully out of balance when she entered the picture. And am I glad!"

Connie gently adjusted the ice pack on her husband's forehead and wondered vaguely what the hell he was talking about. . . .

ELECTRICITY LINKED WITH LIFE

By WILLIS WHITE

BRINGING Frankenstein's monster to life by using lightning and electricity (remember the book and the picture?) is not so unreal as it may seem.

Dr. Robert S. Schwab, of the Brain Wave Laboratory of the Massachusetts General Hospital and the Harvard Medical School, told the American Institute of Electrical Engineers that life and death are very closely connected with electrical activity.

He said, "In these days of super-sensitive amplifiers and recording apparatus it is very tempting to define life and death in terms of electrical activity. Whether or not this concept is accurate, we can, on present knowledge, liken living tissue to a B-battery and dead tissue to a burned-out generator. The function of living tissue, however, is so closely allied with its electrical activity that knowledge of the latter has given us better understanding of the working of the human body."

Dr. Schwab went on to state that there are four types of body electrical currents. One being a small direct current in which the cells act as a B-battery. Another is an alternating current wave that accompanies contraction of muscle tissue. It also occurs in connection with activity of nerve fibers. The third type is "associated with the more highly developed types of contractile tis-

sues, such as the heart. This is used to operate the electrocardiograph, important instrument enabling physicians to diagnose heart ailments.

"The fourth type of body electricity is that associated with the complicated tissue which makes up the central nervous system of animals. Here as the function is continuous during life, the ganglia and brain cell tissues are ever-active electrically and show no periods of rest in the manner of muscle and nerve. Each brain cell does not actually heat alone, but by a system of interconnections they keep each other stimulated to activity. These chains of neurones make up the bulk of the brain and spinal cord of man and animals."

A further statement of Dr. Schwab was that the number of possible combinations of neurones is represented by the number 1 followed by 2,783,000 zeros, which is greater by far than the number of electrons and other elementary particles in the entire universe, according to astronomical estimates.

Extremely sensitive recording equipment is required by these currents, but they show waves of different kinds which have been very useful to physiologists in studying the cells of the central nervous system.

HAPPENS TO LEFTY FEEP

by ROBERT BLOCH

LEFTY Feep clutched a knife and fork and stared at the waiter.

"I am starved," he panted. "I am so hungry I could eat a horse. So you better bring me one of those hamburgers you serve. It's the same thing."

As the waiter moved away, I sat back and gazed into Feep's glowing face.

"Quite a sunburn you have there," I remarked. "Where have you been?"

"Nowhere," Feep shrugged.

"Then how did you get that swell suntan?"

"Like I say—nowhere."

"I mean, were you outdoors a lot?"

"It doesn't matter," he told me. "In-

***Weird things happened to Lefty
Feep when he went to the
land of Average Man***



doors or outdoors you get suntanned nowhere."

"But you're suntanned all over."

"Yes. All over nowhere you get suntanned."

I gave up. "We seem to be getting nowhere fast," I murmured.

"No," said Lefty Feep. "You got to have one of those things to get nowhere."

"What things?"

"Why, the things they put me in to send me nowhere. That's the place I get my suntan. Nowhere. Because that's where the sun is when it goes behind a cloud."

"You mean nowhere is a place?"

Lefty Feep nodded. "Of course it is. It's very simple."

"Simple? It's positively half-witted!" I exploded. "Where is *nowhere*? Who are *they*? And what *things* do they put you in to send you there?"

"To answer your questions in one-two-three order," said Feep, "1. I do not know where nowhere is because it ain't, really. 2. *They* are the guys at the Institute. 3. I do not remember the name of the thing they put me in, but when I get out I am in such a shape it might as well be a straitjacket."

"A fine explanation," I snapped, sarcastically. "Nowhere is a place that ain't! And what's this about going to some kind of an Institute? You haven't been locked up in a sanitarium, have you, Lefty?"

"No, but I am about ready for one after what I just go through. I have a bad case of beebies, with jeebies on the side."

I rose. "Well, I can't make head or tail out of what you're trying to tell me," I sighed. "And I must be on my way."

"Not so fast." Feep politely halted my stride by stepping on my feet.

"I will explain it all to you," he

offered. "It is such a story as will be right up your alley."

"Junk, I suppose," I said, under my breath.

But Feep slowly manipulated me back into my seat. Then, leaning forward, he swiftly manipulated his tongue.

* * *

I AM walking down the street the other day trying hard not to look like a junk man, because I certainly am down in the dumps.

I am in such a daze I do not even look where I am going—in fact, I pass up three taverns in a row. This does not really matter, because I am so bent that if I go into a tavern somebody is liable to mistake me for a pretzel.

It is getting to such a point of poverty with me that I am seriously considering the idea of walking on my hands, to save the rubber in my heels.

I am just thinking about getting down on the sidewalk and trying it when I hear a voice from up above me, yelling, "Hey—you!"

So I shake my Adam's apple on its stem and look up. I am standing in front of a big grey building with a sign plate in front which reads *HORSE-CRACKER INSTITUTE*.

And up in the second story window is this guy sticking his head out and looking down at me.

"Hey there," he calls. "Would you like to make fifty bucks?"

I gulp. "What you got up there?" I ask. "A counterfeiting machine?"

"No. This proposition is on the level," he yells back. "Or, rather, it's on the second floor. Second floor of this building. Walk right up."

So what have I got to lose, except a little more rubber from my heels? I head for the door and march up a flight of stairs. At the landing is a

big door which also is labeled *HORSE-CRACKER INSTITUTE*. I push it open and step in.

I am standing in a big white-tiled room. It has a high ceiling and a lot of these fluorescent light fixtures. The place is filled with long tables piled with silver tubes and glass jars.

The guy at the window runs over to me while I am looking around.

"What kind of a joint is this?" I ask, politely tipping my cigar to him.

"Why, this is a laboratory," he tells me.

I stare at him, kind of puzzled. "I always figure a laboratory is a place where you go to wash your hands."

The guy gives me a long look, and then he smiles.

"Perfect," he says. "Just as I thought."

Naturally, I like compliments, but I realize I am no Victor Mature and I wonder what he is fishing for. So I give him a long look, too.

He is a very short personality and quite fat, being built on the order of one of Armour's Star Hams. But from the long white robe and spectacles he wears, I figure he is some kind of doctor. In fact I am almost ready to stick out my tongue at him and say "Ah" when another door opens at the end of the room and a second edition enters the laboratory.

THIS one is almost a duplicate of the first. He is also short and fat, and wears goggles. Both of them have a head of hair like an order of chow mein, and both of them are now wearing big grins as they stand close together and look at me.

"Too bad I do not have a copy of *Gone With the Wind* to stand between you," I tell them. "Because you certainly would make a nice pair of book ends."

The second personality taps his partner on the shoulder.

"Wonderful," he whispers. "Observe his frontal lobes! Why, he's almost a cretin!"

"Better than that," says the first guy. "It won't be any loss to society if the experiment fails. He looks positively sub-moronic to me."

"Cut out the flattery," I tell them. "Who are you birds and which one of you is the goose who's going to lay me fifty golden eggs?"

The first little guy comes up and bows.

"Allow me to introduce myself," he purrs. "My name is Sylvester Skeetch. And this other gentleman is Mordecai Meetch."

"Skeetch and Meetch, eh?" I say. "What you running—a vaudeville team?"

"Don't tell me that our names are not familiar to you?" Skeetch snarls.

I shake my head.

"You do not know of Sylvester Skeetch and Mordecai Meetch, the renowned heads of the *HORSE-CRACKER INSTITUTE*?"

I keep on shaking my head.

Meetch scowls at me, now. "You do not know of our scientific experiments on atomic energy? You are not aware of our thesis on the synchronization of molecular pulsation? Can it be that you do not even take cognizance of our work in the field of electronic disintegration?"

I shake my head so much it looks like a salt-cellar, what with the dandruff pouring out.

"I do not take nobody's cognizance, or whatever," I tell them. "And I do not know what kind of monkey business you two finks pull off. All I am interested in is the fifty buckaroos I hear about on the street."

Skeetch shrugs his shoulders.

"That is not precisely the spirit with which to approach an important experiment," he says. "Don't you feel the exalted spiritual ardour of a martyr to scientific research?"

"Listen, brotber," I answer. "All I feel is a hole in my pocket which fifty bucks will patch up nicely. Now, what do I have to do to get it?"

"I shall explain," says Meetch, shouldering the other scientist aside.

"We are at the moment engaged in studying the effects of atomic bombardment on forms of inorganic matter. It occurred to us that a still more fascinating experiment would be a similar study of the effects on organic matter. You follow me?"

"I follow anybody for fifty bucks."

"True, in our work we have subjected guinea-pigs and rabbits to the action of the machine, but we are unable to ascertain any direct chemical reaction due to the somewhat unfortunate fact that the atomic energy tends to—how shall I phrase it?—disintegrate the animals completely. I trust you will be willing to risk disintegration, Mr. Feep?"

"What kind of ration?" I ask him. "I do not wish to cross up the government."

MEETCH gives Skeetch a funny look. Then he shrugs again.

"Well, this has nothing to do with the government, I can assure you. All we need is your consent to this experiment. You will undergo atomic bombardment."

"You want to use me as a clay pigeon for cannon practice?" I object.

"Not at all! This is not bombardment by gunfire. We merely turn a form of energy upon you to observe the reaction."

"Like an X-ray machine?"

"Well—something like it."

"This double-talk of yours gets me

confused," I tell them. "Maybe in plain English you can tell me what you want, but I doubt it."

Skeetch pats me on the shoulder.

"Certainly. Our proposition is simply this—if you get into that machine over there and let us turn on the current, we will give you fifty dollars."

He points now to the machine. The reason I do not notice it before is because it is in another room. Or rather, it *is* the other room.

Through what I figure is a glass wall, there is a big silver cup, with a lot of gimmicks on the outside. Now I notice a switchboard on the wall of this room connected with the silver cup beyond the glass. I give it a good look.

"What happens to me if I get in the machine?" I ask.

Skeetch smiles. "Nothing, probably. We don't exactly know. We've never tried it before."

"A fine thing! Some risk you want me to take!"

"There's fifty dollars for you in it."

"Well—"

"Sign right here."

They have a paper stuck in front of me and a pen.

"This signifies that you consent willingly to the experiment. It also guarantees you your money."

"I dunno—"

But I sign anyway.

And Skeetch and Meetch lead me into the machine. I go through the glass door and sit down inside. Then they get busy, bolting the door behind me, and work their switches.

Now I am not scientific-minded, understand, and about the only machine I know how to work is the one where you get three lemons up in a row and some nickels come out.

But I figure that maybe you will be

interested in this atomic-disintegrator, or whatever they call it, so perhaps I should describe it a little.

It is sort of a big thingamajig with a lot of gadgets on the sides and a big silver whatchamacallit on the end. I sit in the center of this whoozis, like I say, and out there in the other room they are turning switches and pressing buttons and pulling levers and twirling dials and then they press a lot of do-funnys. The whole apparatus is sort of like one of those you-knows. Only with a lot more mechanisms. See?

WELL, I see, too. I sit there all alone, and listen to a lot of humming noises that start up on all sides of me. Something like *Old Black Joe* with a boogie beat. Then some lights begin to flash on and off, like the ones on the back of a patrol wagon. And all at once the round turntable I sit on begins to spin. I spin with it. The humming gets louder and I am sailing around like the ball on a roulette wheel.

Then I just catch a glimpse of Skeetch and Meetch both pressing down a big lever on the switchboard. It is so heavy they both hang onto it to bring it forward, and when they pull it there is one single howl and everything goes black. Except me. I go bumpety-bump on the old noggin, and in two seconds I am out colder than an Eskimo at the North Pole who left his fur shorts in the igloo.

I do not know just how long I am un in the conscious. But when I open my eyes again, it is no longer black around me. It is grey.

Grey. All grey. Greyer than the front of my trousers after I smoke a cigar sitting down.

I am standing on a grey plain. At least I think it is a plain, or a sort of plateau—not a desert, because there is grass under my feet. That is, the stuff

is something like grass, and something like dandruff. But it is grey.

Off in the distance I can see some trees. At first they resemble bath sponges because of their color, but they must be trees from the size of them. They are also grey.

So is the sky. Everything. Not white. Not black. Grey. The color of my face when I look in the mirror on the morning after.

I begin to feel like this is one of those mornings after—or maybe even the night before. Except that never in all my hangovers do I ever hangover anything like this.

I do not know how in the world I get here. Or how out of the world I get here. All I can remember is being in that dizzy machine and getting dizzy myself. Then I wake up and stand here in the back yard of My Little Grey Home in the West.

I juggle my eyeballs looking for Skeetch and Meetch, but they are not with me. I also fret my retina to see that automatic milking-machine or whatever it is I am sitting in when I pass out. It is absent.

So here I stand, lost, strayed or stolen, in a grey fog.

"Looks like the nowhere everybody is always a thousand miles from," I mumble.

"Indeed," says a voice.

It is a flat, grey voice.

But it is a voice. And that's enough to make me jump right out of my skin. While I crawl back in, I turn around and take a look at the specimen that comes up behind me and addresses me suchly.

He is a tall, bald-headed fink dressed in a very conservative grey suit. I can not describe the geography of his puss, because all he wears on his face is a blank look. There is no more expression on his pan than there is in

his flat voice.

Anyway, I do not waste much time giving this stranger the once over. I am too glad to see another human being, and I have too many questions to ask. I run up to him fast.

"WHERE am I?" I gasp.

"Nowhere."

"Where?"

"No. Nowhere, sir," he says.

"Are you by any chance giving me the old razz?" I inquire.

"Certainly not."

"But I must be somewhere."

"Of course," he nods. "You are here, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, this is Nowhere."

"Nowhere is here?"

"That is correct. You are now Nowhere. To be exact, you are at Random."

"And just where is at Random?"

"Why, in the State of Oblivion, of course." This dignified-looking fink gives me the nod again. I can only stare back at him.

"I really am," I whisper, under my breath. But he hears me.

"Just as sure as you're not alive," he says.

"But—I *am* alive!"

The fink frowns. "Nonsense!" he snaps. "There's no such thing as life!"

Now I really stare. I am beginning to suffer from an acute case of poultry-bumps when I hear this. "You mean you're dead?" I chatter.

He smiles, a little. "No, I'm not dead. I just don't exist, that's all. I don't exist."

My goose-pimples are the size of mountains, now.

"But you're talking to me," I splutter. "You must exist. Why, you're as real as I am!"

He actually laughs. "You aren't real

either, of course," he chuckles. "Or else you wouldn't be here."

"But I am real!"

He keeps right on laughing. "Now don't try to tell me you *believe* that superstition about reality," he gets out. "The next thing I know you'll be saying you actually swallow all that scientific hooey about the existence of a Third Dimension."

"Of course there's a Third Dimension," I begin. But he just hands me another frozen grin, and when he shakes his head I almost see the icicles run off his face.

I am really up a stump during this run of Abbott-Costello dialogue we go through. First I think maybe I am dead, then I think maybe I am not real any more, and now I think I know what the score is.

Obviously this dignified personality is just a wee bit nuts.

I FIGURE I better find out fast, because if he isn't crazy, there is just a tiny chance that I must be. So I give him another intelligence test.

"By the way," I yap. "Nowhere is quite interesting to me, but I wonder if you could tell me something. Why is everything around here so grey?"

"Grey? What is this grey?"

"A color, of course. Everything here is grey-colored."

"But it isn't at all," he tells me. "Those trees, for example. They're a lovely shade of coopric. And the grass here is a beautiful breehn. Naturally, the sky is verlow."

"Yes, and I'm a monkey's uncle."

"I am not interested in your family background," he snaps back.

"You're screwy."

"No. I'm John Doe," he tells me. "John Doe?"

"Precisely. John Doe, at your service."

"Now where have I heard that name before?" I murmur.

"Probably on a warrant," he says. "My name appears on many legal papers."

"You mean you're the guy they refer to when they issue a John Doe warrant?" I gasp.

"Who else?"

"But I, I always think it is some kind of legal gag," I object. "Or just a fake name they use in school books, like Richard Roe."

"You refer to my brother, of course," smirks John Doe. "We can probably meet him over at the hotel, if you are interested."

"Hotel?"

"Yes. I believe he is staying there with John Smith."

"Smith?"

"You must be aware of the fact that John Smith is registered at the hotel. He has so many rooms he often obliges with the loan of one or two."

"Wait a minute now, huddy," I get out. "Let me go over this once more. You say this is Nowhere, and you are not alive and not dead, but just don't exist. And your name is John Doe and you have a brother, Richard Roe, and he stays with the John Smith who signs hotel registers."

"What is so unusual about all that?" asks John Doe.

"Plenty, my friend," I mutter. "To begin with, how can a guy be neither alive or dead, but still kicking? And how can he be Nowhere?"

"Simple scientific truth," John Doe answers. "You must realize that it is a primary scientific postulate that matter cannot be destroyed."

"So what?"

"Therefore all imaginary characters have an actual existence in the unconscious. This is the unconscious."

"Somebody is unconscious, anyway."

"Don't you see? If the name John Doe is used on legal documents thousands of times, then there must be an actual counterpart of John Doe somewhere, someplace. But not being real, he isn't anywhere. So where is he? Nowhere! Quite simple, isn't it?"

"I have an uncle who is quite simple," I reply. "Only they put him away in the laughing academy years ago."

"Doesn't it occur to you that if John Smith's name is on a million hotel registers there must be a John Smith?"

"Then I suppose there must be a lot of other finks running around loose here," I sneer. "Like the Innocent Bystander and Mrs. Grundy, and John Q. Public."

"Right you are," Doe comes back. "They are all here. You will probably meet them soon."

"Not me," I yell. "I am getting out of here on the next street-car."

"Street-car? What is that?"

"I see you do not have any street-cars here," I sigh. "So I guess I am stuck."

"Who do you say you are?" asks John Doe.

"I do not say *who* I am," I come back.

"But that is the whole point. What imaginary character are you?"

"I am no imaginary character. My name is Lefty Feep," I inform him.

"Feep? Lefty Feep? What kind of a name is that? What do you represent? Who would invent you?"

HE RATTLES off this string of insults without batting a grey eyelash. I grab him by the collar.

"It does not matter what my name is, buddy," I snarl. "But your name will be mud unless you tell me how to get out of this nightmare!"

John Doe doesn't even pay $\frac{1}{2}$ down

of attention to all this. He just scratches his head and keeps on.

"Besides, you aren't even the right color," he winds up. "I think it best if you will come with me. We may have to see somebody in authority to decide what to do about your case. I feel that you might even be an impostor!"

And he grabs my arm and marches me off.

After a minute, I figure I better go with him quietly. You know the old saying—when in Rome, see what you can do to Mussolini. I got nothing to lose, and maybe I can find out how to escape from this mess.

Every direction looks the same to me, but this John Doe steps off just as if he knew where he was going. I toddle along, and we pass between the spongy trees and come out on some winding roads between grey hills. Then I spot somebody.

"Hey," I mention, "I see someone coming."

Doe nods, and squints at the approaching party.

This personality is also dressed in grey, but a very sporty shade. Sort of a goat coat with a chest vest, and advance pants with a neat seat. He also carries a cane, and either his underwear is too long or he is wearing spats.

He prances up, walking very carefully like his stomach was a goldfish bowl filled with rare tropical fish. As a matter of fact, you would think he was stepping out on a stage.

When he sees John Doe he stops short and a big smile smears itself over his puss. He stretches out both hands and opens his mouth. "Strike me blind!" he shouts, in a rolling voice. "If it isn't John Doe. Oh, lucky day!"

"Do you know who that is?" Doe whispers to me.

"I am not sure, but I think if he had

a couple slices of bread around his shoulders instead of a coat, I would take him for a ham sandwich."

"Right you are," Doe tells me. "He is the celebrated actor, George Spelvin."

"George Spelvin? But there is no George Spelvin—that's just the name they put down when they use an extra in a play, or somebody doubles in two parts, isn't it?"

Doe doesn't answer me. Because Spelvin gets wind of my statement and he stalks over.

"There is no George Spelvin, sir?" he orates. "No George Spelvin? Do you dare dismiss one of the greatest names in the tradition of the thea-truuhh? A name famous since the day of the immortal bard, Avon's swan, Will Shakespeare? True, my name has never been accorded the prerogatives of stardom, but in my time I have saved many a vehicle from extinction by the grace of my performance."

"Maybe you're right. I see your name at the tail end of many a turkey in my day."

"I never appear in a poor production, sir!" Spelvin booms, waving his arms. "You have but to see my Clerk in *The Merchant of Venice*, my Woodland Sprite in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, my Courtier in *Romeo and Juliet*—"

"You have but to see my fist in your mush," I tell him, "unless you stop that line of gab."

Spelvin shrugs. Then he turns to John Doe. "Ah, as you recall, I seem to owe you a slight debt. A trifling sum of \$5. This is your lucky day, sir. Allow me to repay you."

I LOOK on with interest. Never in my life do I expect to see a barn actor pay back a bad debt. But then this whole setup is screwy enough for just that. So I watch while George Spelvin hauls out his wallet and wades

through the moth-balls until he can open it. He hands John Doe a bill.

"Wait a minute," I yell. "That's Confederate money!"

Both of them give me a queer look.

"Of course it is," Doe tells me. "What do you expect us to use here?"

He pats Spelvin on the back and thanks him. Spelvin bows and walks away.

"Goodbye," he calls. "See you again. Meanwhile—don't take any silver dollars. Ha, ha!"

And laughing merrily like a ticklish hyena, he goes on down the road.

I scratch my brain-bin.

"So you use Confederate money, eh?" I mutter. "I suppose you got similar customs along other lines?"

"What do you mean?" asks John Doe.

"Well—what's your favorite sport here, for example. What game do you play?"

"We like jigsaw puzzles," he tells me.

I am baffled. "Jigsaw puzzles? That sounds normal enough to me."

"Yes. There's nothing we'd rather do than take a jigsaw puzzle apart."

"Take it apart?" I shout. "I thought so! Do you like music? Don't suppose you have any juke-boxes here?"

"Certainly we do," Doe comes back.

"What's the current hit?"

"*The Lost Chord*," he tells me. "Just a few notes, but it sounds like nothing you'll ever hear."

"I believe you."

All of a sudden I see something off to one side of the road. A lot of clouds, very grey and dusty, that seem to be bubbling around in the air.

"What are those?" I inquire.

"Figments," he tells me. "Just figments."

"Figments?"

"Figments of the imagination, of course," Doe explains. "Ideas that

haven't crystallized yet."

He turns to me. "Maybe that's it—maybe you're an abstract notion that hasn't been fully developed."

I stop in the middle of the road. "Now get this straight. I take about all the insults I intend to this trip. All I want from here is out. Let's get down to brass tacks."

"Brass tacks? You want to go to the brass tacks storehouse?"

"Oh, cut it out, will you?" I wail. "Just take me to somebody who can explain all this."

"We are arriving now," Doe reminds me. "Right around the next turn in the road is the philosopher's house. If he can't solve your problem, nobody can."

SURE enough, we are coming around the bend at considerably less than 90 miles an hour when my whistle breaks into a scream. Because there, rising out of Nowhere, stands a little grey cottage.

Sitting right in front of it, at the side of the door, is a head.

At least, all I can see is a head. Everything else is hidden by stacks of books. Thousands and thousands of books, piled up around the doorway.

"When we get closer, I notice a little fellow huddled up behind the stacks. He is reading a heavy volume and he is so absorbed in it he does not even look up.

I give him a squint and realize why he looks peculiar. He is wearing three pairs of glasses!

"Is this your philosopher pal?" I whisper. "No," says John Doe. "Don't you realize who that is? That's Constant Reader."

"Well, I'll be damned," I predict. "He just sits out in front of the house all day and reads, I suppose."

"No," says Doe. "Sometimes he sits out in back of the house."

I let this one pass.

John Doe goes up and knocks on the door.

A very nice-looking young tomato sticks her noggin out and smiles.

"Is this the philosopher?" I whisper.

"Not at all," Doe answers. "That's Sally."

"I know," I snap. "She must be the Sally that everybody wonders what became of."

"Right," says John Doe. "You're catching on fast."

Sally shows us into the house. I think to myself that it is a pity a girl so young has grey hair and wonder if I should slip her a bottle of henna or something.

But there is no time, because we now stand in the parlor of the philosopher.

HE IS a very old personality with a very determined chin—three of them, in fact. And all covered with a beard. Needless to say, this beard is like everything else around here—full of tattle-tale grey.

His eyes flicker when he sees us, and he raises one band out of the long white kimono he wears.

"Hail!" he says.

"Hail!" says John Doe.

"Cloudy, with showers," I predict.

"Lefty Feep," Doe pipes up, "Allow me to present that celebrated Greek philosopher and authority, Anonymous."

"What's the name?"

"Anonymous," Doe repeats.

"Don't I hear this name before?" I mutter.

Anonymous hurls me a sneer. "Everyone reads my works."

"What do you write for," I inquire, "*The Racing Form*?"

"Not lately. Though once in a while I do give out a few hot tips."

"Then I do not run across your stuff, I guess. Because all I read is the sport-

ing papers and what I find written on the walls of phone booths."

"I write all that," Anonymous tells me. "Though I am more famous for my poetry and quotations."

"You must pardon me if I interrupt this literary discussion," John Doe breaks in. "We come to you because of a problem."

"No time for problems," Anonymous snaps. "See my cousin, Ibid."

"But you must help us. It's about Lefty Feep, here. Or rather, Lefty Feep, Nowhere. Because he doesn't seem to belong Nowhere but maybe some place else."

"Make your mind up," Anonymous grunts. He turns to me. "What have you to say, Feep? Where are you from—here, there, or some place?"

"Well, I—"

"And remember, when I say 'here' I mean somewhere else, since obviously Nowhere can't be here, even though this place is Nowhere. And when I say 'some place' I mean any place, but not this place. Here. You follow me?"

"I am too mixed up to follow anybody," I confess. "Even a redhead."

"I want to know from whence you hail," growls Anonymous. "Hither, thither, or yon? Near or far? In or out, up or down, or just around the corner?"

"Not unless there's a tavern on it," I confess. "I am simply and purely an uptown boy. All I want is to get out of this place, wherever it is."

"Wherever it isn't, you mean."

"I want to go home, as sure as I'm alive!" I yell.

Anonymous jumps out of his chair.

"You hear—he thinks he's alive!" he says to John Doe.

"That's what I'm telling you," John Doe answers. "I want you to do something."

"Do something?" the philosopher

comes back. "Never do today what you can put off until tomorrow."

"But we can't have a real person running around here in Nowhere."

"Cheer up," says Anonymous. "I'll find a way. It's always darkest just before it rains. Every silver lining has a cloud."

"But—"

"I've got it! We'll take him to see the Boss!" yells the old philosopher. "Let him decide what to do. You take him there, now."

"Aren't you coming along?"

"I've got a lot of letters to write," says Anonymous.

So John Doe turns to me.

"Come on, Feep. We're going to see the Boss," he tells me.

"Think he can help me?" I asked.

"Certainly."

So I follow John Doe out of the philosopher's dump and down the road again. We travel along the gravel for quite a distance.

"Who is this Boss you talk about?" I inquire.

"You'll recognize him at once," John Doe answers.

"He's the big shot here in Nowhere?"

"Naturally. Who else would be?"

"But what's his name and racket?"

"You'll understand when you see him."

And that is all I can get out of John Doe.

WE WANDER through the grey for a long time, and I don't see anything of interest. Once I spot something queer in the distance. It looks like a large, black pony, only it has a human face. The face has a big cigar in its mouth and I also notice a human hand where one of the horse-hoofs should be. The hand is stuck out and seems to be shaking empty air.

"What is that?" I whisper.

"Oh, just a Dark Horse," Doe tells me. "We're grooming him for a political candidate."

"Looks like one at that," I answer, as the horse turns his back to us and goes on grazing.

But the grey fields are otherwise empty.

Until the house looms over the side of the road.

I stop short when I see the house. It startles me.

That is because this house has colors. It is white, with a green roof. It looks funny, because it is *normal*.

We head right for it.

"This is where the Boss lives?" I whisper.

"Right."

We go through a gate and two finks sitting in lawn chairs get up and meet us.

"Which one is the Boss?" I ask.

"Neither. Meet Mr. Null and Mr. Void. They're the Boss's servants."

I shake hands with Mr. Null and Mr. Void, both of whom have very blank looks on their faces. Neither of them smile or say anything. But a tougher bunch of bodyguards I never see. They follow us up the steps to the front door.

John Doe rings the bell.

The door opens and a man looks out.

His face looks very familiar. Very very familiar. I have a feeling I know him from somewhere but I just can't place his name. It is a face I see all my life.

He shakes hands. "Hello, buddy," he says.

His voice is familiar, too. I swear I talk to him before—maybe over the telephone.

I stare at him again. He is wearing ordinary clothes. A cheap blue suit and a white shirt and a blue tie with dots in it. He has brown shoes and black socks with clocks in them.

Even his clothes look familiar.

"Feep," says John Doe. "I want you to meet the Boss—Mr. Average Man."

Mr. Average Man! Of course that's who it is—and he naturally would be the boss here, too!

"Come in," says the Average Man.

We enter his house. Null and Void follow us hut say nothing.

SOMEHOW I stick close to the Average Man. I figure he is the most human in this whole screwy setup. I decide it is easier to talk to him, and since he is the boss of Nowhere I might as well play along a little.

"This is certainly an honor to meet you," I pipe. "I hear about you for many years."

"Thanks," he says. The voice still sounds familiar. "Lucky you arrive when I'm home. Sometimes I'm working."

"Got a joh, eh?"

"Part time." He leads us into the parlor. There is a lot of ordinary-looking furniture inside. "Sit down," he says.

We squat. He walks over to the radio and fiddles with it. Then he scowls.

"Won't work, I guess."

"Let me try it," I suggest. "Maybe I can fix it."

"I doubt it. You see, there's only 8/15th of a radio there."

"Only 8/15th of a radio?"

He nods. "Statistics show that the Average Man owns 8/15th of a radio."

I blink. What kind of talk is this?

"Have a cigarette?" The Average Man holds out a package. I take one. So does he. He holds his cigarette on the table, grabs a pocket-knife, and cuts it in half. He puts one half in his mouth and throws the other half away.

"Why that?" I ask.

"The Average Man smokes 2½ cigarettes a day," he tells me.

John Doe coughs a little. He wants to get in on the gab, too.

"Do any driving lately?" he inquires.

The Average Man sighs. "How can I drive 5/6th of a car? he complains. "Part of one tire is missing and part of the engine is gone. I just buy the average quota of gas and oil, but I can't drive the car. It's only 7/12th paid for anyway."

"How's your wife?" John Doe goes on.

"Don't see much of her," says the Average Man. "You know we're 1/6th divorced."

"Too bad. Been feeling all right, though?"

The Average Man frowns. "My appendix is acting up a little."

"But isn't it out? Last year—"

"I know." The Average Man shakes his head. "It's out. But I've got 1/10th of an appendix left. The Average Man has 1/10th of an appendix according to latest figures."

ALL this stuff is over my head like a dive bomber. But there is a sort of screwy sense behind it all. I am just beginning to figure things out when I hear John Doe talking.

He is telling the Average Man about me. How I claim to be alive and real, and what Anonymous says, and how we come to the Average Man to let him decide what to do with me.

And the Average Man is beginning to give me a very nasty glare.

"I don't believe it," he says. "I don't believe it. How can a real person exist in Nowhere?"

"But I'm here," I say.

"That's beside the point. I know where you are. The thing is—what will we do about it?"

"Can't you send me back?"

"Back to Earth?"

"Yes."

"Why should I?" asks the Average Man.

"But I can't stay here. I'm Lefty Feep and—"

"Exactly." He grins. "You are Lefty Feep. As Lefty Feep you don't belong in Nowhere. But if you become some one else, then—"

"Some one else? You mean you will change me into one of these symbol things like all the rest of you?"

The Average Man stands up.

"A mistake is made when you arrive here, obviously. As ruler of Nowhere it is up to me to rectify that mistake. Why send you back? Why not keep you here—change you into a symbolic figure and make you a useful citizen of Nowhere?"

"But I don't want to be anyone else."

"Anybody else—" The Average Man murmurs. Then he yells. "I've got it!" he shouts. "I've got it! I know who you'll be!"

"Who?"

"Why, the one missing symbol. Missing because he never exists. You'll be Nobody!"

"Who?"

"Just a Nobody!"

John Doe gets up and clasps his hands. "Splendid! Nobody is missing a long time. He looks like the perfect Nobody to me."

The Average Man smiles. "There's a privilege for you! You'll be Nobody from Nowhere!"

I think fast.

"But how can I be Nobody when I look like Lefty Feep?" I argue.

The Average Man gives me a chuckle. "Very simple. I will make you Nobody. All we do is cut off your head. Your head will still be alive but you'll have no body. You'll be Nobody—get it?"

I get it, but I don't like it.

I turn around and do a fast break-away for the door.

There stand Mr. Null and Mr. Void, the bodyguards. Their faces are still blank but they grab me very firmly and hang on.

"NICE work, boys," says the Average Man. "Now we'll just snick off his head and make him Nobody in no time."

I am really scared now.

"Wait," I shout. "Think of the disgrace such a thing will mean. For the sake of your reputation—"

"The Average Man is respected," he tells me.

"Well, for the sake of your wife, then—"

"You forget I'm 1/6th divorced," he laughs.

"But think of your family, your children—"

The Average Man suddenly looks mournful.

"My children," he sighs. "Yes, my poor kids. My poor two and 3/10ths children. What will I do about them?"

"Two and 3/10ths children you have?" I ask.

"That's the average," he answers. "The two are all right, but I don't know what to do about the 3/10ths. He isn't happy at all, and things are happening to him."

"What things?"

"Well you know how it is in such cases." The Average Man blushes. Then he whispers something to me.

I perk up.

"Listen," I say. "Maybe I can help you with that."

"You can?"

"But only if you help me."

"I'll do anything. Anything."

"Can you send me back to Earth?"

"Well—I could."

"How?" I am taking no chances, see?

"If I stop believing in you, you'll disappear," he tells me. "Then you'll probably go right back to earth."

"Stop believing in me?"

"Of course. Anything the Average Man doesn't believe in will disappear. For example, I've stopped believing in dictators lately—they will disappear soon."

"That's good news," I answer. "But if I solve your problem about your two and 3/10ths children, will you stop believing in me?"

"It's a deal," says the Average Man. "Just tell me what I should do about the 3/10th one."

So I bend over and whisper to the Average Man.

He gets it.

"Of course—thanks a million!" he chirps.

"All right. Stop believing in me."

The Average Man nods. Then he closes his eyes.

I close mine. Because I am suddenly very dizzy. John Doe, Null and Void, the grey plains—all of them swirl around in a fog. The fog comes up. I feel myself falling, falling—

I land. Land on home base.

Right back where I started from. I am sitting in the big cup in the laboratory. The two scientific Americans, Skeetch and Meetch, are bending over me.

"What happens?" I gasp weakly.

"The machinery jams on us," says Skeetch.

"How long was I out?" I ask.

"Two seconds," Meetch answers.

"You mean that I go through all that in two seconds?" I wail. "But I can't possibly—"

"What do you think happens?" asks Meetch.

Then I think about it. Maybe I pass out. Maybe it is all a nightmare.

Whatever it is, nobody will believe me. So I must let it go.

"What do you think happens?" Meetch repeats.

I sigh.

"Nothing," I whisper. "Nothing happens."

LEFTY Feep waved his arms.

"And so that is the way it ends. Skeetch and Meetch get back to fixing their atomic disintegrator or whatever, and I walk out and come here. My trip to Nowhere is ended." He grinned. "Sometimes I hardly believe it myself."

"You aren't the only one," I responded.

Feep pouted. "You mean you do not believe my story either?" he accused. "What is wrong with it?"

"I haven't got the time or energy to go into that," I told him. "So I'll settle for just one point."

"Which is?"

"This business about your meeting with the Average Man. You claim everything he had was just average. 5/6th of a car, and 8/15th of a radio, and two and 3/10th children."

"Absolutely. Look up the statistics for yourself."

"I'm not questioning the statistics. I'm questioning you. What I want to know is this—why did the Average Man let you come back?"

"Because like I say, I solve his problem for him. I tell him what to do about that 3/10th of a kid."

"What was wrong with it?"

"What do you think?" Feep shrugged. "The kid is spoiled, of course."

"But what did you tell him to do?" I persisted. "What can anybody do with 3/10th of a child?"

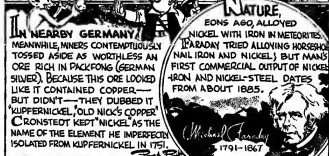
"Keep it in the ice-box," grinned Lefty Feep.

ROMANCE OF THE ELEMENTS—NICKEL



EARLY EAST INDIA COMPANY

ADVENTURERS BROUGHT BACK FROM CHINA CURIOUS CANDLESTICKS AND BOXES MADE FROM AN ODD METAL KNOWN AS "PACKFONG." IT STARTED A FAD IN BRITAIN. PACKFONG BRIC-A-BRAC BECAME DECIDEDLY "SMART"; ENGLISH CRAFTSMEN OF THE MID-1700'S IMPORTED THE METAL, APED ORIENTAL DESIGNS.



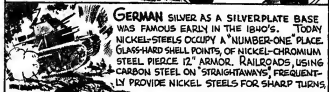
IN NEARBY GERMANY

MEANWHILE, MINERS CONTEMPTUOUSLY TOSSED ASIDE AS WORTHLESS AN ORE RICH IN PACKFONG (GERMAN SILVER). BECAUSE THIS ORE LOOKED LIKE IT CONTAINED COPPER—BUT DIDN'T—THEY DUBBED IT "KUPFERNICKEL," OLD NICK'S COPPER. CRONSTEDT KEPT "NICKEL" AS THE NAME OF THE ELEMENT HE IMPERFECTLY ISOLATED FROM KUPFERNICKEL IN 1751.

NATURE, EONS AGO, ALLOYED

NICKEL WITH IRON IN METEORITES. PARADAY TRIED ALLOYING HORSESHOE NAIL IRON AND NICKEL, BUT MAN'S FIRST COMMERCIAL OUTPUT OF NICKEL-IRON AND NICKEL-STEEL DATES FROM ABOUT 1885.

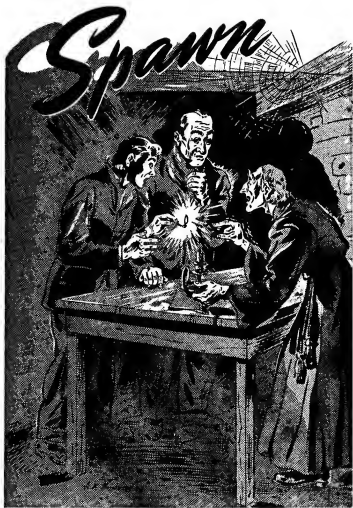
Michael Faraday
1791-1867



GERMAN SILVER AS A SILVERPLATE BASE WAS FAMOUS EARLY IN THE 1840'S. TODAY NICKEL-STEELS OCCUPY A "NUMBER-ONE" PLACE. GLASS-HARD SHELL POINTS, OF NICKEL-CHROMIUM STEEL PIERCE 12" ARMOR. RAILROADS, USING CARBON STEEL ON "STRAIGHTAWAYS," FREQUENTLY PROVIDE NICKEL STEELS FOR SHARP TURNS.

NICKEL is number 28 in the International Table of Atomic Weights. Its symbol is Ni and its atomic weight is 58.69. Nickel is a whitish metal with a tinge of yellow, and is malleable, ductile and magnetic. It occurs almost always in association with cobalt. It is an important catalyst. It is found mostly in the Sudbury district, Ontario, and in New Caledonia. It is used extensively in alloys because of its extreme resistance to rust and to exposure to hot alkalies.

(Next Month: The Romance of Nitrogen)



of Hell

by P. F. COSTELLO

No matter what the punishment in the hereafter, here was a priest who dared to call upon demons to fight the Nazis

"The things I shall call out of hell will be horrible beyond imagination!" said the priest huskily

THE long powerful German staff car crawled slowly along the tortuous trail that was but faintly outlined by the silver light of the moon; and in the rear of the car Ober-Leutnant Reinwold smoked nervously and glanced from side to side, striving vainly to pierce the Stygian gloom of the Black Forest which rose in a engulfing dark wave from the sides of the rutted road.

"Careful, fool!" he barked at the driver, as the car lurched suddenly. "Do you want to kill us both?"

"Sorry, sir," the driver said. He was hunched close to the wheel and his eyes were narrow, red-rimmed slits in his stolid face. The long lances of the headlights stretched ahead of the car like the feelers of a giant bug. Their bright sharp light knifed through the swirling fogs that drifted through the dark mass of the trees and lowered over the road like a grim pall.

The driver wiped the windshield with a gloved hand.

"How much longer?" the Oberleutnant asked.

"Only a few hundred yards, sir," the

driver grunted.

Oberleutnant Reinwold settled back against the cushions of the car and lighted another cigarette. He looked out of the right window again and an involuntary shudder crawled along his spine as he contemplated the moody, desolate horror of the terrain.

The thick dark mass of trees grew to the edge of the poorly defined trail and their soft leaves scraped against the top of the car as it passed; a gray swirling mist hung over the entire area, thick, damp and oppressive. And overhead the slim crescent moon cast an eerie silver glow that frosted the tips of the trees with a pale luminescence.

The Oberleutnant drew the fur collar of his great coat closer about his shoulders. He was a tall, sparely built man with a narrow face and hard gray eyes. He was a complete realist. There was nothing in appearance to suggest otherwise; and yet there was something in the weirdness and wildness of the Black Forest, something about the ancient legends that were whispered about this area of brooding mists and moaning winds, there was something in all this that got under his tight armor of icy realism and pierced him with a strange sense of terror.

He dropped his cigarette to the floor of the car and ground it out with heel of a polished boot. He found a certain satisfaction in the physical action of destroying the glowing ember of the cigarette, of grinding the tobacco and paper into a shredded pulp. The Oberleutnant liked things that were solid and real; things that could be felt and seen and heard; things that could be bent and broken and crushed. For that reason the Oberleutnant did not like the Black Forest and its brooding sense of desolation and mystery. He had the feeling that its secret was one that could not be destroyed.

He lit another cigarette and he felt a slight irritation with himself. He was behaving and thinking like a superstitious peasant. He smiled ironically and drew deeply on his cigarette. The smoke drifted from his mouth in blue-gray streamers and merged imperceptibly with the white wisps of fog that seeped into the interior of the car.

He reflected that in just such a manner would National Socialism absorb the impure doctrines and ideologies that held other nations in their demoralizing grasp. The Oberleutnant considered this thought for a moment and he was pleased with its profundity. It had a touch of the same mystical vision that accompanied der Fuehrer's pronouncements and it was certainly not a thought that would occur to a peasant.

He would mention it casually at the next party meeting. Who could tell? It might drift upward and find its way to Goebbel's ears. And that would not hurt the career of Oberleutnant Reinwold.

THE car stopped abruptly at a crossroads. A helmeted figure stepped from a motorcycle at the side of the road and approached the car.

Oberleutnant Reinwold stepped from the car and returned the soldier's brisk salute.

"Well?" His voice was crisp with eagerness. "Have you caught them? Have you found their trail?"

The helmeted soldier shook his head.

"We have had no sign of them, Herr Oberleutnant. I have contacted all the other patrols before meeting you here. They report the same as ours. We have patrolled every possible trail and searched every house in the vicinity but have not seen them. The earth has swallowed them without leaving a trace."

The Oberleutnant slapped his gloves

into the palm of his left hand with a sharp cracking report.

"Fools! Dumkopfs!" he cried. His voice was boarse with biting, caustic rage. "The two of them were seen in Heidelberg only six hours ago. They have fled to this section of the forests. And you cannot find them! Are you waiting for them to walk into your hands? Have you looked for them?"

"We have looked. We have questioned everyone in the neighborhood. But everywhere it is the same. The peasants know nothing. And they are smiling at one another as we leave."

"The swine!" Oberleutnant Reinwold muttered. He slapped his gloves into the palm of his hand again. There was a bard thoughtful frown on his face. "There is a monastery in this neighborhood, is there not?"

"Yes. I think it was called Saint Benedict's. It is a crumbling pile of stones, now. There is one old monk there, Brother Joseph, but he is half blind and out of his head."

"Have you searched there?"

"No, but—"

"Fool!" the Oberleutnant said disgustedly. "You should have looked there first. How far is it from here?"

"Only a mile or so. It is in the valley at this foot of this road."

"Get in the car. We shall pay Brother Joseph a visit. Perhaps he is not as harmless as you seem to think. . . ."

OBERLEUTNANT REINWOLD flashed the light of his torch on the massive oaken door of the monastery as he strode up the mossy stone walk that led to the main entrance. His feet slipped on the soft slick moss with each step; and thick swirling mists transformed the light of his torch into a ghostly flickering beacon.

But he was not afraid. The comforting weight of his Luger hung at his

waist and the firm steps of the helmeted soldier matched his own as they approached the massive, rusty-binged door.

The soldier drew his gun and gripped it by the barrel. When they reached the door he pounded its solid timbers with the butt of his gun, until the thudding reverberations echoed back from the depths of the forest.

Oberleutnant Reinwold stepped back and surveyed the vast looming bulk of the monastery, silhouetted against the pale light of the moon. Its towers had crumbled years before to the general level of the building; broken panes of glass winked in the faint light like the sly eyes of an old beggar. And there was a brooding, pervading silence that shrouded the dark pile of rock with a sepulchral atmosphere.

His study of the building was interrupted by the dry rusty rattle of a chain and he heard hinges creaking protestingly. The door of the monastery opened slowly and an old man with a candle in his hand appeared in the doorway. One thin hand was cupped about the guttering candle flame and above this light, two rheumy blue eyes stared out with mild bewilderment.

"Yes?" the old man said in a thin faltering voice. "Is there something you want?"

Oberleutnant Reinwold studied the white-haired, brown-frocked old man for several seconds in silence. He noticed the thin, hunger-twisted body, the trembling hands and weak loose lips and he observed the blank dazed light in the old monk's blue eyes.

He slapped his gloves into his hand with sudden irritation. This was a species that should be completely eliminated from the Reich.

"We are looking for two criminals, old man," he said, biting the words off sharply. "They are known to have

come this way. Have you seen them?"

"Criminals?" The old man looked apprehensively from Oberleutnant Reinwold to the helmeted trooper. "What have they done?"

"They have attempted to escape from Germany," the Oberleutnant snapped. "They are heading for the Swiss border. They are non-Aryans. Have you seen them?"

"No, I have not seen anybody," the old monk said, shaking his head slowly. His hand strayed uncertainly to his sunken cheeks. "I do not see anybody anymore. But I used to," he said softly. A slow smile came on his face. "There used to be many of us here. We worked in the fields all day in the hot sun but we did not mind. At night we prayed together in the chapel. We were very happy."

He looked uncertainly at the Oberleutnant.

"Would you like to see my chapel? It is very pretty."

"No, you old fool!" The Oberleutnant's thin face was flushed with anger. "I have important work to do. I can't waste time listening to your babblings. Have you heard anything, seen anything at all tonight?"

THE old monk looked at him with puzzled eyes.

"There isn't anybody here any more," he said in a soft patient voice. "Don't you remember? There used to be many of us but the soldiers took them all away. I have prayed ever since for them, because many of them were very young. I prayed that the soldiers were kind to them. I hope my friends are happy, where ever they are."

"No," he said softly, "they have taken everyone but old Brother Joseph. "But they couldn't take me," he said, and there was an anxious note in his voice, "for I must keep the candles

lighted. If I left there would be no one to do that. They won't take me, will they?"

There was a desperate pleading note in his faltering voice and his gaze moved from the trooper to the Oberleutnant in a mute, childish fervent appeal.

The Oberleutnant snapped his gloves into his hand angrily. He glared at the trooper. "Why didn't you tell me the old fool was demented? Can I get information from a raving madman? Bah! Your stupidity should be reported."

He turned on his heel and strode down the stone pathway to his waiting car. The trooper hurried along behind him.

Oberleutnant Reinwold paused with his foot on the running board and looked back at the monastery. The old monk was still standing in the doorway, his shabby cassock flapping in the wind, the candlelight outlining his thin stooped figure. He raised a hand and waved slowly.

There was a thoughtful smile on the Oberleutnant's thin face.

"In case I forget," he murmured to the trooper, "remind me to sign an order transferring this old fool to a concentration camp tomorrow." His white teeth gleamed in the dark as his smile widened. "Brother Joseph misses his friends but we shall remedy that pathetic condition. We shall put Brother Joseph with his friends where he can be happy."

He climbed into the car.

"And now," he said harshly, "we will continue our search. . . ."

BROTHER JOSEPH stood in the doorway until the staff car had moved away into the darkness, until its lancing headlights were no longer visible. Then he closed the heavy oak

door and locked it with slow careful deliberation.

His slippers shuffled against the smooth stones of the floor as he moved along the dimly lit corridor that led to a high arch, beyond which the main chapel was visible.

Brother Joseph stood under the high arch for several moments and there was benign tranquility on his old face as his eyes moved lovingly over the heavy, burnished wood of the pews, the single votive light that burned before the low altar, and the small grottoes that had been carved into the solid rock walls.

After a while he shook his head wearily, tiredly, and moved slowly toward the altar. There was a kneeling bench stretching before the altar but he did not pause to pray.

He shuffled to the back of the altar, moving like a weary aged wraith through the flickering shadows that danced in grotesque patterns against the wall.

His hands moved over the back of the altar until they touched a smooth, slightly irregular stone. He pressed down slowly and a door in the seemingly solid stone of the altar swung slowly open. A flight of crudely chiseled stone steps led downward into blackness.

Brother Joseph stepped into the opening and pressed another stone. The door closed behind him as he descended the steps with slow sure steps.

There was a movement below him. A voice whispered:

"Brother Joseph? Is it all right?"

"Yes, my son. You may light a candle." The voice of the frail monk was solid and strong now and there was in it a deep authority.

A match flickered and then the steady glow of a candle fought stubbornly against the darkness. Brother Joseph stepped down into a large,

rock-walled room that was damp with the chill of the under earth.

Two men stood in the center of the room. One was young with black hair that fell over his high forehead and flashing eyes, but the other man was old and worn. His face was dazed and hope had died in his eyes.

"Who was it?" the young man asked tensely.

"Storm troopers," Brother Joseph answered. "They have gone away."

"They never go away," the old man said dully. "They wait until you think you are safe and then they strike."

Brother Joseph patted the older man's sagging shoulder.

"Courage," he said. "Others have escaped the Gestapo. God is with us. Tomorrow morning you will be in Switzerland."

"I know we will make it," the younger man said. "Something inside tells me that we will not fail." He looked at Brother Joseph and said, fervently, "If we do our lives will belong to you, Brother."

BROTHER JOSEPH smiled and shook his head slowly.

"I am but one tiny link in the chain that stretches from the corrupted heart of Germany to the shores of England and America. We who work in the underground are not individuals. As individuals we are nothing; we are helpless. But as a strong chain welded together with the thought of fighting the monster of Nazism we become important; we become powerful in our unity. Our only mission is to save as many as possible of the persecuted souls who have been caught here in this terrible land. When we succeed, we thank God. And tonight I think I shall be saying prayers of thanksgiving for your safe conduct to Switzerland."

"How much longer must we wait?"

the young man asked.

"I do not know. Pastor Mueller is bringing two more refugees here. He will lead you the rest of the way."

The older man looked up, a wondering light in his eye.

"But you and the Pastor Mueller are not of the same Church—"

"We are of the same God," Brother Joseph said. "The good Pastor's church has been one of the links of the underground for many months."

"You say he is bringing others here tonight?" the young man asked worriedly. "But the forests are swarming with the Gestapo. Can he get through?"

"He has before and he will again," Brother Joseph answered quietly. "When he arrives you will leave immediately. Until then you must wait patiently."

There was a statue of Saint Benedict, the founder of the monastery in the corner of the room and Brother Joseph took the young man by the arm and led him to the carved figure.

The statue was set in a niche in the wall, with head raised and hands outstretched in a gesture of supplication. There was a small kneeling bench before the shrine.

Brother Joseph pointed to the statue.

"I like to think of the good Benedict when situations are dark," he said. "It is sometimes heartening to realize that others have faced tragedy and trouble and were able to survive their ordeal, stronger than ever." His face was grave as he studied the statue of the Saint.

"Benedict labored in one of the most dangerous of all fields of study, that of demonology and exorcism. On the very spot of this monastery's foundation he fought his most terrible battle against the powers of darkness. The story has come to us through the centuries and

doubtless alterations and exaggerations have distorted the original account, but I think the essential facts are substantially true. This area of the Black Forest was infested with unnatural monsters that had somehow escaped the bonds of hell and death. They prowled the dank byways of the forest seeking the damnation of souls. Benedict fought them unceasingly with bell and book and with every bit of holy power at his command. And on this very spot he completed the exorcism of this area. The unhuman fiends, the undead, unclean monsters were driven forever back to their black haunts. And this monastery was built to celebrate his victory. Benedict risked his immortal soul in the battle against the fiends of darkness, but he triumphed gloriously. You see—"

Brother Joseph broke off abruptly. His thin hand gripped the young man's arm like a claw.

"Do you hear?" he whispered tensely.

THERE was a tramp of booted feet above their heads; a swelling murmur of voices.

"Pastor Mueller?" the young man asked. He stared white-faced at the aged monk.

Brother Joseph shook his head.

"No. I fear my optimism was premature. The Germans have returned."

"What shall we do?"

"I must go up," Brother Joseph said. "Perhaps I can get rid of them again. You must hide in one of the deeper recesses of the monastery. The entire buildings are honey-combed with catacombs and long-forgotten vaults." He pointed urgently to a corridor that led off from the room. "Take that until you come to a blocking wall. There is a door that leads to another room. From that room you can escape to the forest.

Go quickly now! If I do not come to you in an hour or so, don't wait. God bless you."

The young man gripped his hand tightly and then, with his companion at his side, plunged into the dark corridor. When their footsteps had died away, Brother Joseph moved slowly to the stairway that led upward to the main chapel.

He ascended the steps slowly. At the top he pressed the keystone and waited in the darkness until the door swung noiselessly open. Quietly he stepped through the door.

Too late was he aware of the deeper shadows at the back of the altar!

Strong hands pinioned his arms; a light flashed in his eyes.

Oberleutnant Reinwold chuckled drily as he stepped forward.

"How interesting," he said. "Secret doors, hidden rooms, every thing a refugee might need to escape the Gestapo."

Brother Joseph saw that the Oberleutnant had at least a dozen troopers with him. Two men held him and the others were spread fanwise about the tall, thin superior officer.

He forced a blankness over his face and eyes.

"I do not know what you mean," he said. "I—"

Oberleutnant Reinwold slapped him viciously across the mouth with his gloves.

"You're lying," he snapped. He motioned to four of his men. "Search the room below the altar."

The men descended the steps, guns drawn, torches stabbing beams of light into the darkness. Their voices floated back a moment later and the Oberleutnant's face flushed angrily.

"Gone!" he snarled. "They can't be gone far."

He turned slowly and studied the aged monk with cold, determined eyes.

"Do you know where they've gone?" he asked quietly.

"I don't know what you mean," Brother Joseph said.

"You don't know what I mean, eh? How unfortunate." He slapped his gloves into the palm of his hand with slow deliberate emphasis. "There are ways to loosen obstinate tongues," he said; "but it won't be necessary."

He nodded to the men holding the monk.

"Take him downstairs."

BROTHER Joseph felt the slow death of despair creeping over him as he was jerked down the steps to the hideaway room under the altar.

Oberleutnant Reinwold closed the door in the back of the altar and followed the rest of his men down. He smiled without humor at Brother Joseph.

"You have been very clever," he said. "Our intelligence has just learned the details of the work you have been doing. They have also learned of the operations of one Pastor Mueller and of the interesting information that he is expected here tonight. He shall receive a pleasant surprise. We shall wait until we have him and his charges safely in custody before we resume our search for the others you so cleverly have been hiding. It wouldn't do to find them and shoot them just yet. The disturbance might scare Pastor Mueller away. And we don't want that to happen, do we?"

Brother Joseph could feel his heart heating wildly within the frail confines of his body. Pastor Mueller would walk blindly into this trap. The underground would be crippled for months, possibly forever, if the Germans were able to smash these two vital links of the chain.

"There is no one expected here to-

night," he said. He knew the German wouldn't believe him, but what else could he say?

"So?" the Oberleutnant smiled, "we are on a wild goose chase, are we? But let us wait awhile and see. If you are right it will be a most amusing joke on us, will it not?"

Brother Joseph was silent. His brain wheeled in a tired circle, but he knew there was no hope.

The minutes ticked slowly away. The troopers were stationed at the stairs and about the wall. Oberleutnant Reinwold stood in the center of the room smiling idly.

Brother Joseph felt a desperate fear coursing through his body. Not for himself, but for the courageous Pastor Mueller, the hunted, persecuted men he was leading to freedom and the whole system that they had developed to fight the ruthless slavery of the Nazi State. These were things that were in danger of destruction.

His anguished eyes moved slowly about the damp, dimly lighted room; they came to rest on the statue of Saint Benedict.

And when he saw that carved figure a desperate thought occurred to him; a thought so terrible in its implications that he murmured a prayer instinctively. But that breath of thought fanned the dying embers of hope in his soul and his mind turned the idea over and over; gripped by its terrible fascination.

He remembered the legend of the founder of the monastery; his mind brought to the fore of consciousness his own half-forgotten memories of the desolate, labyrinthine passages and vaults that honey-combed this ancient building, and of dimly remembered stories he had heard, and of the dark and horrible tales that clung to this site, like a hateful miasma seeping from

an evil swamp.

A cold sweat stood out on his face; a chilling tremor passed over his body. What was he contemplating? What mad evil plan was spawning in the dark recesses of his brain?

And then, with a sudden gleaming flash of understanding, he knew that he would do anything, no matter how darkly desperate, if it would offer a chance to destroy these Germans.

His heart was thudding with hammer-blows at his ribs; his throat was dry and tight.

He turned from the statue of Saint Benedict to the superior officer who was standing in the middle of the room.

"Do you mind if I pray?" he asked.

Oberleutnant Reinwold raised a cynical eyebrow.

"If you think there is anyone listening," he said, "you have my permission to go ahead."

"Thank you," Brother Joseph said.

HE WALKED to the bench before the statue and knelt. He did not fold his hands; he did not raise his eyes. He felt it would have been blasphemy to lift his eyes to the heavens while his heart's request was . . .

His prayer was simple.

"You drove the bounds of hell from this place Saint Benedict. Now there is a new horror loose on this earth. Summon forth again—"

The terrible words stuck in his throat. His tongue could not form them, his will refused them sound. There was something so monstrously unclean about what he was asking that he felt a staggering sense of guilty terror.

He knew that he couldn't do it. A stronger man, a man who could hurl a defiance into the seething pits of hell, might have uttered the words, but it was beyond his power.

He raised his face and scalding tears were on his cheeks.

"Forgive me," he said brokenly. "It was not for myself I would have asked this terrible thing. It was—"

The candle at the foot of the statue flickered. A cold clammy draft touched his cheek with a feather's touch and a long whining moan sounded in the long dark corridor.

Brother Joseph's fingers closed slowly.

A blast of cold wind lashed into the room with an angry crescendoing roar. There was a dreadful lost wail in the moan of the wind, as if it had howled over the wastelands of the world and had roared through cold space and had touched things that were loathsome and putrid with approaching death.

Oberleutnant Reinwold backed away from the force of the blast. The torch in his hand was dimming. Shadows of darkness were closing inexorably in on the small band.

"Turn your torches on," he shouted to his men.

Their answers were torn from their teeth by the lashing wind.

Brother Joseph felt a nameless, writhing horror, creeping over him, paralyzing his thoughts.

"My God, *what have I done?*"

This tortured cry, from the depths of his soul, was whipped from his mouth and hurled to oblivion by the sobbing, screaming wind.

And the lights were all out!

Darkness, final and complete, filled the room.

And then Brother Joseph heard a sound that was not made by the throat of a living thing; a slobbering, champ-fing obscene sound that seemed to violate by its very existence everything decent and honorable that had ever been known to mankind.

An instant later he heard something

slithering in the corridor that led to his room; a sound that was like a furry, unfooted body dragging itself across wet, slimy stones.

And he heard footsteps approaching, too.

Footsteps that moved slowly and heavily with solid tread, but he knew that no human foot could create that sound; for human, two-footed creatures do not have hooves.

Dimly, from afar it seemed, he heard the shrill, soul-numbing screams of the Germans, as the monstrous, unclean horde of *things* advanced, emerging from what noxious pit man could only imagine in his maddest dreams, hell-spawn surging forward with slavering jaws.

And the wind rose to a wild scream.

Brother Joseph clasped his hands until the knuckles whitened; his eyes rose to meet the stone countenance of the statue above him. His lips moved in prayer and gradually the sound faded away; a great vast silence surrounded him as he knelt there, eyes upraised, hands clasper.

But the Germans heard; and eventually they saw. . . .

DAWN broke over the monastery clear and bright. Reich Inspector von Moltke stepped from his special car as the first rosy rays of the sun were bathing the crumbling buildings in pastel brilliance.

"This is very queer," he said to the soldiers who had accompanied him. "Intelligence ordered Oberleutnant Reinwold to apprehend a group of escaping refugees here last night. They have received no report from him as yet. We shall investigate."

He entered the monastery and in due time discovered the hidden door at the rear of the altar and descended to the hidden room that had offered a haven

to so many weary refugees.

The first thing the Reich Inspector noticed was a white-haired monk kneeling before a statue. The Reich Inspector drew his gun but it was not necessary.

The man was obviously dead; he was smiling and his hands were still clasped over his breast.

Reich Inspector von Moltke then turned to the other side of the room. There were thirteen things lying on the floor. The things had once been German soldiers.

The Reich Inspector had superintended much of the butchery in Poland; he had seen the effects of starvation

and plague in Greece; he had been present at Lidice; but nothing in that extensive experience had prepared him for the sight of those thirteen things on the floor of the little room under the main chapel of an abandoned chapel.

He stumbled up the steps and hysterical, incoherent noises were sounding in his throat. There was a fleck of froth on his lips and his eyes were those of a wild man.

He couldn't talk for hours; and by the time he finally got himself under control, there was not the faintest trace of the route that Pastor Mueller had taken with his refugees.

The End

The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

(Continued from page 7)

WHEN a human being suffers ill health from digestive disturbances or nutrition deficiencies, he loses weight and becomes thin and emaciated—but not so with fish. When a fish suffers digestive disorder, it begins to gain weight.

This strange paradox is explained by the fact that fish live in water. Therefore their gain in weight, with the loss of other body tissues, is the result of the larger absorption of water. When a human is in poor health, the fat in his tissues is absorbed and used, and there is nothing to take its place, but when the fat in the tissues of the fish is used up, the water in which it lives takes its place, thus increasing its weight.

THE "mescal vitamin," vitamin B₁, so called because it exercises a beneficial effect on the human nervous system, has been found in large quantities in the buds and leaves of many common American trees, by Yale University botanists. Heavy concentrations of the substance were found in the buds of oak, horse chestnut, white pine, red maple, elm and sycamore trees.

Professor Paul R. Burkholder stated that "Although vitamin B₁ is now produced by synthetic chemical processes, this discovery points to a large natural source of vitamin B₁. This finding may offer a clue to the source of essential vitamins for many forest animals."

WE LIVE today in a world that is speed-crazy. If we have a method of producing something, we are always looking for ways to cut

down the time it takes for production with as little loss of quality as possible.

Now we hear that Donald K. Tressler of Geneva, New York, has obtained patent number 2,181,839 on his process to produce a sherry wine with good quality and flavor in from three to four weeks instead of three months as previously required by the old methods. Moreover, the new process enables the wineries to use cheaper grapes such as concord in producing the wine.

First the juice is obtained from the grapes and fermented into wine. The raw wine is then subjected to a heat of 140 degrees Fahrenheit which produces tiny bubbles of air or pure oxygen that bubble through the wine. This speeds up the aging time and the sherry flavor is produced in the new shortened period. The patent has been assigned to the Cornell Research Foundation, Inc., at Ithaca, New York.

IN ORDER that explosives may be used with perfect safety, it is necessary that their destructive powers be accurately known.

For this purpose a laboratory test is necessary. And of course the equipment must be wholly dependable as a failure would be fatal.

In the laboratories of one American explosive manufacturer, testing is accomplished in a thirty-inch bomb, twelve inches in diameter. Explosives are placed inside and detonated. The bomb is so powerful that, instead of bursting as one would expect, it confines the gases, measures the pressure of the explosion, and thus determines the potency of the explosive.

Research men have exploded countless charges within the chamber of the test bomb. It has withstood their force because it is made of a special chromium vanadium machinery steel which is tough enough to confine the tremendous generated pressure without damage. —R.S.P.

FANTASTIC—BUT TRUE

By ALEX WAMAN

Facts such as these prove that fantasy is not confined only to fiction!

BUYING WIVES ON CREDIT

SOMEHOW or another the natives of the Kei group of islands in the Netherlands East Indies have found out about instalment buying and they use the "pay a little each time" plan of buying their brides. This plan was revealed by Field Museum anthropologists, who said that the price for a bride may run as high as five hundred dollars. The bride's father keeps a record of the payments on a board where a complete description of each payment is cut. Since payments may be made in commodities, the record must tell just what each payment consisted of. After the entire sum is paid, the father-in-law gives the bridegroom the board to show that he has paid in full and that he now has a complete title to his wife.

* * *

GALLANT ANCIENT ARTISTS

THE artists of ancient Egypt were true gentlemen at all times while performing their art. It was a convention among them that in all portrait statues they must never show women as being fat or very old. In portraying their males, the artists would occasionally have a fat or older man, but even the men, as a rule, were shown to possess bodies with the ideal slenderness of youth or at least the vigor of the prime of life.

* * *

OCTOPUS NAMED AFTER THE PRESIDENT

IN HONOR of President Roosevelt, an octopus species from the Galapagos islands, hitherto unknown to science, has been named *Octopus roosevelti*. Specimens of the octopus were brought back by Dr. Wald L. Schmitt of the United States National Museum, who was on the presidential cruise among the islands in 1938. Other marine specimens taken on this cruise were also given the name *roosevelti*.

* * *

FAKING A WINTER SCENE

NINETY degrees Fahrenheit—a Hollywood studio lot—a winter snow scene to be shot—and you as an observer could almost swear the icicles on the set windows, melting in the noon-day sun, were real. Well, here's how they do it. The icicles are made chemically of cellophane

and water glass—the substance used to preserve eggs. After being shaped they are dipped in alcohol, which hardens them, and then they are dipped in paraffin to form a coating. Under the heat of movie set spotlights the paraffin melts giving a very natural and realistic effect of icicles slowly melting.

* * *

LEMON GAS

MOLDY lemons give off a gas, the composition of which is not known as yet, that greatly speeds up the production of yellow color on the rinds of lemons kept in the same container or room.

When dark green lemons are exposed to the gas produced by the mold fungus they turn yellow several weeks sooner than similar unexposed lemons, and their respiratory activity is greatly increased.

* * *

JUST A FEW LEFT

THE United States Fish and Wildlife Service reports that there are only about 14,000 high-horn sheep left in the west, scattered throughout twelve states. Strict laws now protect the animals from being hunted. There are also a number of sanctuaries.

There are two varieties of these sheep; the Rocky Mountain highhorn which comprise about 8,350 highhorn with Wyoming, Colorado, and Idaho most widely populated.

Then there is the desert highhorn, with approximately 5,350, settled mainly in Nevada, California, and Arizona.

These animals receive protection in a number of National Forests and National Parks where they live. Although known primarily as a wild-fowl area, the Boulder Canyon National Wildlife Refuge in Nevada has more than 350 highhorns.

* * *

MOLASSES IN MORTAR

NOW that India is going all out in the war effort we can expect to hear of many new processes and ideas that originate in that country. One of the first to come out is the process whereby mortars are strengthened by adding 10 to 15 percent of molasses. In addition to its greater strength, the new type mortar is preferable because it sets much quicker than the old type.



The Great

by JOHN YORK CABOT

He was the meekest little guy you ever saw, but he had a wonderful and frightening power

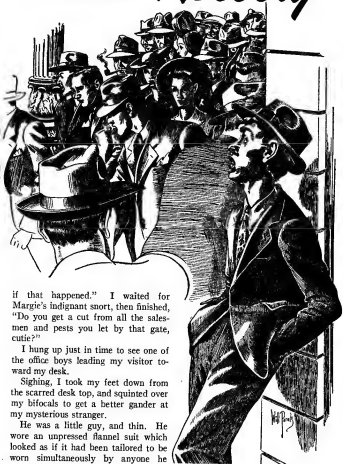
THE COPY GIRL had just snatched the last sheet on the foreign news summary I'd completed for the bulldog edition, and I was leaning back lazily to catch an uninterrupted smoke, when the telephone at my elbow jangled.

Margie, the old crow at the reception desk, was on the wire.

"Pete," she said, "there's a man on his way in to see you."

"That's nice," I said sweetly. "Did you make sure he had the right directions? You wouldn't want any strangers to get lost on their way in to see me. After all, they couldn't bother me

Train Robbery



if that happened." I waited for Margie's indignant snort, then finished, "Do you get a cut from all the salesmen and pests you let by that gate, cutie?"

I hung up just in time to see one of the office boys leading my visitor toward my desk.

Sighing, I took my feet down from the scarred desk top, and squinted over my bifocals to get a better gander at my mysterious stranger.

He was a little guy, and thin. He wore an unpressed flannel suit which looked as if it had been tailored to be worn simultaneously by anyone he

cared to invite in. Back on his head was a stained gray fedora badly in need of cleaning and blocking. A Will Rogers' cowlick of blond hair stuck out under the fedora and covered half his forehead. The rest of his face was a pug nose, round, blandly naive eyes, and a big, friendly mouth.

The office boy paused ten feet from my desk, pointed to me and mumbled something to my little visitor, who marched on alone from there. He stopped beside my desk and looked down at me, grinning amiably.

I looked up, but didn't grin. Then his first words caught me under the solar.

"Hello," he said. "Who are you?"

For a minute I was too floored to do anything but gape.

"It doesn't matter, really," he assured me during my breathless interval. "It doesn't matter as long as you're important."

"Thank you," I finally said. "Thank you very much. Now, if you won't mind my asking, just who in the hell are you, and bow in the name of everything nasty did you get in here?"

My visitor continued to grin.

"Those things don't matter, either," he said.

"That's nice," I told him. "That's very nice. I'm very glad that nothing matters. Now please get the hell out of here before something does."

My visitor kept grinning.

"Don't you want to know?" he asked.

I looked at him a minute. Looked at him and tried to decide if this was a gag or what.

"Look," I said at last. "I'll bite, once. But if this is a riddle, get ready to run for your life." I took a deep breath. "All right, know what?"

"About the train robbery," the little guy answered. He seemed pleased with himself.

"What train robbery?" I asked patiently.

"The Capitol Limited," he said.

"It's been robbed?"

He nodded his head vigorously.

"That's right. I robbed it."

I LOOKED at him. "You robbed the Capitol Limited, and now you've come to tell me, eh?" I paused. "When did you rob it?"

He thought a minute. "About forty-five minutes ago," he said.

"The Capitol Limited is just about two hours out of Washington right now," I told him. "Washington is quite a distance from here. You must be thinking of another train."

He shook his head. "Oh, no. I know what train I robbed. It was the Capitol Limited."

"I'm glad you're sure," I told him solemnly. "That would be a terrible thing to be mixed up on."

"I'm sure," he said.

"That's good," I told him. "Now get out of here before I lose my mind and my temper and my job."

He seemed surprised.

"But I thought—" he started.

"You imagined," I said. "That's quite a different word."

"I thought you'd be willing to ransom it," he said worriedly, not grinning any more.

My patience was getting thin. "Ransom what?" I snapped.

"The Capitol Limited, the train I robbed."

I pushed back from the desk. "Presuming that you robbed the Capitol Limited," I snarled, "how would that fit in with my ransoming it? Ransom comes when something is kidnapped."

A look of relief spread across his face. He grinned again.

"That's it. That's what I mean. I stole it, kidnapped it!"

Suddenly I wasn't quite so irritated by this little guy. Here was an angle, a fresh one. Any loon can say he held up the Capitol Limited, but it takes an ace screwyloole to claim that he stole the entire train while it was in transit. In the newspaper game you get jaded, and as a consequence your respect for new angles and fresh ideas is something amounting to reverence.

I began to see a feature in this little lunatic.

"Pull up a chair," I invited him cordially, "and tell me all about it."

He shook his head, still grinning. "I haven't got a lot of time," he said. "Will you ransom it, or won't you?"

I was stalling for time, thinking of some angles to slant my feature around this dream world superman, and wondering if he'd be talked into posing for photos.

"Let me get this straight," I said. "You have stolen the Capitol Limited in broad daylight, right off the tracks, so to speak, and now you're holding it for ransom. Is that right?"

He nodded vigorously.

"Where did you hide it?" I demanded.

He smiled. "That would be telling. Then I couldn't get ransom."

I nodded solemnly. "That's right," I said. "That's the smart way to look at it. Your secret is your secret. How much ransom are you holding it for?"

The little guy stopped grinning and grew serious. He seemed to be doing a bit of mental calculating, and his lips moved as he thought. Then he took a deep breath and looked me in the eye.

"Five dollars," he said. "I can't take a cent less."

I gagged a little over this. It was the most staggering anti-climax I'd ever encountered. Finally I recovered.

"Isn't that a little high?" I demanded.

"I was going to ask ten," he said doggedly.

"And if you get five bucks you'll put the train back on the tracks and let it proceed to Washington unmolested?" I asked.

The little guy nodded. "I won't touch it again," he promised.

"How soon can you put it back where you got it?" I demanded.

"Right away," he said. "Anyway, in five or ten minutes."

I WAS more certain than ever that we had a feature here. I was ready to do anything to hold him for more talk and some piks. I pulled out my wallet, extracted a fiver.

"Okay," I said. "You win. You've got us where we can't squawk. Here's the dough."

He took the five faster than Lincoln could blink, stuffing it into his trousers pocket.

I stood up. "Look," I told him. "You wait right here a minute. I'll be back in a few seconds. I've a couple of people I want to introduce to you."

He smiled, and I moved past him and rapidly down the aisle into the photog room. I found Legs O'Rourke busy doing nothing in there. I told him what I wanted and he agreed. I went back to where my little chum was still waiting by my desk.

"Come with me," I said. "I want you to do me a favor." I steered him gently by the arm back into the photog room.

O'Rourke had set up a tripod.

"I want a picture of you receiving the five dollars ransom from me," I told my little loony.

Somewhat suspiciously he reached into his pocket and pulled out the crumpled bill. I took it from him, while we both lined up in front of O'Rourke's camera, enacting the handover scene.

"Both grin toward me," O'Rourke said.

We did, and a flash bulb popped.

"Got it," said O'Rourke.

I took my screwy louie chum by the arm and steered him back to my desk again. He'd put the five bucks back in his jeans.

"You haven't told me who you are, yet," I said.

The little guy grinned and opened his mouth.

"Harrigan!" a voice screeched above the city room din. It was the dulcet coo of my editor, Hangman Hogan. I jumped.

"Just a minute," I told the little guy. "I'll be right back."

I left him standing by my desk and hurried up front. Hogan wondered profanely about the lack of any Mediterranean news in my foreign war digest for the bulldog. It was fully five minutes before I was able to get away from his desk.

When I got back to my own desk, the little guy was gone.

I grabbed up the telephone.

"Margie," I demanded of our crow receptionist, "did that little guy you sent in to see me leave by your portals?"

"No," she snapped, and cut me off.

I looked all over the city room. I peered out into the hall half a dozen times from side exits. There wasn't a sign of my little halfwit.

When I got back to my desk I was boiling. There was my feature and my five dollars shot to hell. There was nothing to do but get back to work. Moodily, I began packing out a digest of the Mediterranean situation for the next edition.

FOUR hours later the bulletin came through. Just a little squib which was slated to be placed on page eigh-

teen. It said that the Capitol Limited arrived in Washington exactly one hour and fifteen minutes overdue. Reasons for delay, the bulletin went on to state, were unexplained, presumably because of wartime censorship.

I sat there staring at the squib for fully five minutes. Staring and marveling at the infinite sense of coincidence which prompts the babblings of lunatics.

Shortly before I was through, Legs O'Rourke came up to my desk. He was frowning, and he had the wet print of a pik in his paws.

"What the hell!" he demanded, tossing the print on my desk.

I picked it up and looked at it. Then my eyes went wide. I blinked. It was the shot he'd taken of my little pal and me. The shot in which I was handing the five dollars "ransom" money to the nut. It was nice photography. Crystal clear. It showed me grinning into the camera and holding out a five dollar bill, *without a sign of the little guy's presence there!*

I looked up at O'Rourke.

"How in the—" he began.

"You tell me," I said. "You took the shot. You took the pik in which I handed him the fiver. His paw was on the other end of the bill when the flash popped, and now there isn't a sign of him in the picture. Go ahead, you explain it."

"He musta ducked quick," O'Rourke declared.

"Plenty quick," I said, unconvinced.

O'Rourke snatched up the print from my desk. He started away, paused, and spoke over his shoulder nastily at me.

"I don't see's how you think *that* was a funny gag!" he snorted angrily.

I didn't answer. There wasn't anything to say. I just sat there thinking. The little guy *must* have ducked as the

shutter clicked. Ducked plenty fast. . . .

FOR maybe a week the little guy was on my mind, then I forgot all about him. Hell, in the newspaper racket you run into a lot of screwy things, and eventually get so's you can shrug them off without batting an eye.

It was almost two weeks after the Capitol Limited gag that I saw him again. This time I ran into him. On a street corner, while I was on my way to lunch.

He was leaning against the side of a building, smiling to himself with his eyes half closed and basking in the sun. He wore the same double-sized flannel suit, the same battered, greasy gray fedora, and his cowlick was over his forehead. He didn't look very different. A little more unpressed, maybe.

I went up and tapped him on the shoulder.

He straightened out and opened his eyes, blinking. Then he recognized me.

"Hello," he grinned.

"You're quite a guy," I said. "Running out on me like that."

"Didn't know you wanted me to stay."

I skipped that. "Incidentally," I told him. "You remember that picture of the two of us?"

He thought a minute. "Sure," he decided.

"It didn't turn out so well," I told him.

"I didn't think it would," he admitted. "I just never seem to photograph well."

"You just duck fast," I said.

"Huh?" He acted as if he didn't get it. I skipped it.

"How's business?" I asked.

"Pretty good," he said.

"Still in the same racket, I suppose," I said.

He nodded, leaning back against the

wall and closing his eyes half shut again.

"What are you holding for ransom now?" I persisted.

He opened his eyes. "Would you be interested?" he asked.

"That depends," I countered, "on how recent it is, and how important."

He grinned. "The Capitol Limited was worth it, wasn't it?"

"I see you got it back pretty quickly," I said.

"After an hour and fifteen minutes," the little guy declared. Obviously, he read the newspapers.

"What are you holding for ransom now?" I asked again.

He grinned. "An airplane," he said.

"What kind?" I asked.

"A bomber. A German bomber."

I shook my head seriously. "I wouldn't be interested."

"It has two generals in it," he said.

"They were flying to Egypt."

"Were they now?" I asked solemnly. Then: "I'm still not interested. You can keep 'em."

He sighed. "I guess I wasted time and effort in that job," he admitted. "I don't get any response at all."

"Not in this country you won't," I told him.

He grinned. "No. I guess not," he admitted. "I'll have to charge that off somehow."

"You keep a list of the things you take?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," he told me, suddenly serious.

"Then you must heist, ah, take quite a lot," I deduced.

He nodded. "Oh, of course." Then he asked: "Like to ransom an American airplane?"

"Maybe," I admitted. "How much is it?"

"Two dollars," he said.

"Who's in it?"

"A couple of flyers. Americans, of course."

I PULLED out my wallet. After all, the loony could use two bucks, and I considered him pretty amusing by now.

"It's a deal," I told him, slipping him two bucks.

He pocketed the money. "Thanks," he said.

A bus drew up to a stop at the corner on which we were standing.

"You got a name?" I asked him.

The bus door opened and a stream of passengers spewed out all around us. I moved aside to let them pass, and the little guy stepped back for the same reason.

When the minor traffic stream had ebbed, the little guy wasn't around any more.

I looked up and down both streets of the intersection and couldn't see hide nor hair of him. I felt a little foolish, and went into the restaurant for lunch.

When I came out, I took a look around for him again, with no luck, of course. On my way to the parking lot to get my car I stopped at the newsstand to scan the afternoon sheets' bulldogs.

Two front page stories caught my eye. They weren't streamered, either of them. But they were prominently displayed in either sub corner.

AXIS BOMBER MISSING IN EGYPT FLIGHT—TWO NAZI GENERALS ARE ABOARD

(C.P., delayed).—German sources admitted for the first time today that a special flight of two Nazi tank Generals to the Egyptian front has been overdue and missing more than six days.

That was the first story to catch my eye. You can imagine my reactions, and imagine them still more strongly as I read the head and lead of the second one.

MISSING U. S. ARMY PLANE, TWO AIRMEN FOUND IN MOUNTAIN SEARCH

(A.N.S.).—Alive, though unconscious for over forty-eight hours, two American airmen and their almost unscathed craft were found by a party of searchers north of Arnville, today. They had both "blacked out" in high altitude tests over mountain territory two days ago, and remembered nothing from the time of their crash.

That was the second story. And I was burning by the time I'd finished it. For I suddenly knew that my "loony" was as crazy as I was. The blank-blank fraud was working a magnificent pseudo-nuts racket and profiting on it by amusing jerks such as myself.

All he did, obviously, was scan the papers, find a sucker, and invent his yarn!

I almost drove through the gate at the parking lot when I got my car out, I was that sore. All I could think of was the seven bucks the grinning little con man had helsted from me.

I was still frothing as I drove back to the office. Frothing and admitting to myself that I'd been slicked through a cunning play for sympathy. You couldn't help but feel sorry for a grinning little nut who imagined he could steal the world—just so long as you didn't know he was as sane as Solomon.

When I parked in front of the *Daily Star* building, I was still a walking charade of indignation as I climbed out and went into the lobby. In the elevator I was so damned sore I missed my floor and had to walk down a flight.

FOR half an hour it was almost impossible to get back to work even in spite of Hangman Hogan's thunderings about slow copy. I was still fuming over the little guy's wonderful racket, and my seven bucks.

And that was just about the time when he waltzed into my office again, grinning just like the first time, and

heading for my desk!

I could only glare at him in astonishment as he marched up to me. Glare and get hotter and hotter under the skin at the realization that he obviously considered me a prize sucker.

"Hello!" he grinned.

"You, you—" I spluttered.

He didn't seem to notice my emotional state.

"How would you like to ransom something really good?" he asked.

I found my voice, and surprisingly enough was able to control it.

"No thanks," I said. "I'd prefer ordering a special job, then ransoming it."

"You would?" he blinked happily.

"Yes," I said, still rigidly under control. "I want you to go outside and steal the first big object you see. Then come back and I'll have the ransom money ready."

"All right," he grinned. He turned away and walked toward the door.

I reached for the telephone. I could get a couple of cops from the Confidence Division over to the office inside of five minutes. They'd be waiting for my little chum when he came back for his "ransom." Then, suddenly I put the telephone back.

It was just beginning to occur to me what a sweet thing the little grafter had here. Confidence Detail coppers couldn't touch him. He wasn't committing any crime. He was just telling atrocious lies and playing nuts. He didn't demand the money he called "ransom." He just looked pathetic or amusing enough to get it. And hell, if someone wanted to give it to him, that was no crime of his.

Maybe I could scare him with a pair of cops on a soliciting charge. But even at that, he wasn't actually soliciting. Not normally, at any rate.

I suddenly felt a grudging respect for the little guy. He really had something

different there. My sense of humor was even returning a little. After all, he had hoodwinked me neatly. But seven bucks was seven bucks. There was a principle to the issue.

For two or three minutes I sat there trying to figure out what to do when he came back.

THEN I had it. I'd just grin, tell him I knew him for what he was, and had deliberately sent him running out of the building on a goose chase just to partially even up our score. He'd feel had enough about it, if—as he undoubtedly was—he was figuring on the neat five bucks or so he'd make on this latest act of his.

That was, after all, just about the only thing I could do.

The little guy came back into the office a couple of minutes later, breathless and beaming. He'd evidently hurried back for the easy touch he figured was coming up.

He stopped in front of my desk.

"Did you find something to snatch?" I asked.

He nodded breathlessly, managing a grin.

"That's good, then," I said. "How much is the ransom this trip?"

"Five dollars." He got his breath back for that.

"Five bucks, eh?"

He nodded, holding out his hand. Wow, what an ass he must have thought me. It wasn't very flattering.

"Put your hand back in your pocket, chum," I said. "You aren't getting a penny more from me. I'm wise."

He looked bewildered. Nice actor. Bewildered and a little bit pathetically hurt.

"But this wasn't an ordinary job," he protested. "It was an order you gave me."

"I've changed my mind," I said.

"Now beat it, pal. Beat it, and don't bother me any more with your racket, understand?"

"But you said you'd pay—" he began.

"You heard me, chum," I said. "Scram."

"It was a special job. It was a—"

"I don't care if you swiped the Unter Den Linden, which isn't a bad idea at that," I told him. "I'm wise to you. W-i-s-e, get it? So run along and sell your act elsewhere."

The little guy's expression had changed completely. He looked, believe it or not, *indignant*!

"All right," he said. "All right."

He turned and left, and that was the last I ever saw of him. The last I ever saw of him in spite of the fact that I've looked all over hell for him for the last six months, ever since that parting.

Yes, you heard me. I've been looking for him. And so have the cops, to whom I gave his description. No, not for confidence game charges, but for larceny. That's right, l-a-r-c-e-n-y.

You see, when I told him to go outside and snatch the first thing he saw, he must have done so. At least I'd swear it couldn't have been anyone but the little guy. Because the first thing he'd have seen on stepping outside that afternoon would have been my car, parked right in front of the *Daily Star* building.

And when I left work that evening my car was gone, vanished. I *know* the little guy stole it. And what makes it worse, is that I know a measly five bucks would have "ransomed" it. And as for the little guy, as each day passes without a sign of my car, I'm beginning to wonder more and more about *him*!

STEP CHILDREN OF A WOLF

By LYNN STANDISH

The fantastic true story of two children in India who were raised by a wolverine!

MANY of us have thrilled to stories of animals rearing children. And many a fantasy writer has had his hero or heroine lost in the jungle when a baby, found and brought up by lions, baboons, tigers, bears, or what have you. In fact, the movies have capitalized many times on that same theme.

Now, here is the true story of two children brought up by wolves.

The two wolf-children of India were first seen living as wolves among wolves on October 9, 1920, by Rev. J. A. L. Singh, an Anglican missionary. He was on a mission trip among the pagan aborigines accompanied by Anglo-Indian friends. In a small village in the tiger-infested jungles of northwest India, the Reverend and his companions were told of a weird "man-ghost" that lived in a high "ant" hill about seven miles from the village. The Reverend and his friends, eager for the hunt, were directed there and upon arrival made a platform in one of the trees.

In the evening three grown-up wolves came out of one of the holes, followed by two cubs. Following the cubs came the "man-ghost," run-

ning on all fours, a horrible looking creature, half human and half animal. Close at his heels came another fierce-looking creature, resembling the first, only much smaller. Unlike human eyes theirs were bright and piercing.

Rev. Singh, being the only one on the platform with field glasses, identified the hideous creatures as human and would not allow his friends who had aimed their guns at the "ghosts" to shoot them.

The next day the group again sighted the wolves and wolf-children. They tried to persuade the natives of the primitive village to dig the wolves out from their ant hill den, but they were too superstitious concerning the "ghosts" and refused.

The next day, the Rev. Singh traveled to a distant village where the people had not heard of the strange beings, and hired them to dig out the wolves.

It took only a few shovelfuls to bring the wolves out of their den. Two frightened wolves rushed out almost immediately and raced away madly. A third appeared on the scene, made no attempt to escape, but struck furiously at the

men digging. She, for it was the mother wolf that had nurtured and guarded the two children, howled, raced around restlessly, gnashed her teeth, and scratched at the ground wrathfully. Before the Reverend could attempt to capture her, the men with him shot arrows at her and she fell dead.

The men, now free of the grown-up wolves dug into the ant-hill which soon fell in, having been weakened and undermined by the wolf den underneath.

It was shaped like a kettle, plain and smooth, as if cemented. Prudent cleanliness was evident, the place was perfectly neat, no signs of bones, droppings or dirt. The whole wolf-family had inhabited this place.

The two cubs and the other two creatures were clutched together in a monkey ball in one corner. It was quite difficult to separate them, the wolf-children growling and scratching and on the whole much more ferocious than the cubs.

However, they were separated finally by throwing sheet-like winter garments over each of them and wrapping them with only the head protruding. The cubs were given to the natives and Rev. Singh took the children to Midnapore where he and his wife devotedly supported an orphanage for the waifs of that region.

THE missionaries believed that a few years of association with normal children would change the wolf-children into normal human beings. The elder of the two was a girl about eight years old and they named her Kamala. The younger, also a girl, about a year and a half, was named Amala. The Reverend and Mrs. Singh decided it would be better not to tell anyone of the children's rescue from the wolves, thereby, perhaps ruining their chances for marriage in later life. However, the story leaked out when the children became seriously ill and it became necessary for a doctor to know their past. This made quite a sensation in India and news of the wolf-children reached the world.

The Reverend and his wife were profoundly disturbed by this, not only because it blasted any marriage hopes for the children, but it also besieged them with visitors, reporters, etc. However, among the thirty odd cases of a similar type this was the first ever recorded in the annals of science where there were actual witnesses to the rescue of the children from their life among animals.

The children were treated as two newly-born humans. They had to be tied in bed to keep them

there and since they tore clothing off as savagely as cubs, diaper like breach-cloths had to be sewn on them. They would eat only milk, which they lapped up out of a dish. They craved raw meat, which was denied them.

One of the wolf-beings was caught eating the entrails of a chicken which she had found in a garbage pail. Both children had magnificent animal-like senses of smell that remained with them many months in captivity.

They disliked and shunned light, but roamed around at night on all fours, moaning wolf-like, the only language they knew. They hated and feared human beings, yet liked and were familiar with all kinds of animals. They would imitate the dog's scratching on the door for entrance and even followed the chickens around on all fours.

IT WAS a slow and painful process to train these children. They had to be taught to stand on two legs, to strengthen those muscles bound in the four-legged position so long. Neither of them ever mastered man's upright posture on two legs well enough to run, but they did learn to walk upright, though somewhat awkwardly.

Recovery was hindered greatly by the death of Amala, who being younger had learned rapidly, and from whom Kamala was also learning. With the death of the only person in the world like her, Kamala seemed to sink into a deep melancholy. Fortunately, however, she began to show a slight interest in her human companions after a short while, especially in Mrs. Singh who always fed her.

Slowly her interest increased and she changed into a pathetic little, sub-normal human being. She was definitely not idiotic as thought at first. She learned to speak about fifty words. She learned to wear and know her own clothes, although she was interested only in red things. She developed enough human intelligence to run errands and play with other children.

This case, among other things learned, has made it clear that when deprived of association with human beings in his earliest years, a human child never recovers complete mastery of the upright position of man, the characteristics of man, or of language, or a complete and fully developed human personality.

The study of the record of the wolf-children of India proves what has been revealed by other similar cases—that both the environmental and hereditary factors united in a complicated drama to produce the human being.

☆ "DRUMMERS OF DAUGAVO" ☆

By DWIGHT V. SWAIN

NEXT MONTH'S SMASHING COMPLETE NOVEL

THE WILLFUL PUPPETS

by WILLIAM P. MCGIVERN

*Larry Temple was in no condition to put
on a show this evening, yet it went on!
Could it be that his puppets were alive?*



The puppet ran down the sidewalk, the letter clutched in its fingers

LARRY TEMPLE was feeling rather low when he stepped out into the alley that flanked the Palace theatre. He had just completed his act and the response of the audience could hardly have been termed enthusiastic.

Larry leaned against the brick wall of the theatre and moodily lighted a cigarette.

"To hell with 'em," he muttered bitterly. "They just don't appreciate any act that hasn't got a strip-tease in it."

Larry Temple was a puppeteer and, as such, he was considered, in the judgment of those in show business, about one notch below a ventriloquist and about on a par with acrobats.

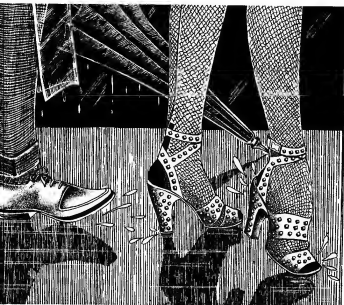
He was thoroughly sick of manipulating puppets for a living, but he had to eat and there was nothing else he could do to earn his cakes and coffee.

As he flipped his half-smoked cigarette away he noticed a small tavern across the street, advertising liquors and beer via a cheerily blinking neon sign.

Larry was not a drinking man, but his present dissatisfaction weighed against his normal abstinence. He crossed the street and entered the small, dimly lighted bar.

The bartender mopped the bar in front of him with a damp rag and looked inquiringly at him.

"Rye," he said. "Make it double."



He lit another cigarette and pushed his gray fedora back on his forehead. He was a clean-cut young man with pleasant brown eyes and a small mustache.

The bartender set the drink on the bar.

"Thanks," Larry said. He tossed a bill on the bar and then picked up the glass of whisky. For a second he inspected the ruddy brown contents of the glass with misgivings; then he lifted the glass to his lips and drained it with one gulp.

The effect was like that of a small bomb exploding gently in his stomach. A warm languorous wave spread from his midriff and flowed down his legs and up to his arms and throat. He hinked and a hiccup shook him slightly.

The sensation was not at all unpleasant. He ordered another drink and loosened his collar. It suddenly seemed a bit too tight.

He glanced at the clock over the bar. It said 8:45. He made a mental note of the time, for his next show was at 9:30. But he had plenty of time.

The second drink was smoother than the first and it was then that Larry made a discovery, which drinkers the world over have been making since time immemorial. Namely, that each succeeding drink tastes better than its predecessor.

This discovery was like a revelation to Larry.

He ordered another drink to prove his thesis and he was nodding with thoughtful pleasure when he had finished the third drink. He was absolutely right. The third drink tasted immeasurably smoother and better than the second, which hadn't been any slouch.

A LITTLE while later he glanced at the clock. He hinked and peered

at it intently. He experienced a faint sensation of annoyance. The damn clock wasn't behaving. Its hands were revolving slowly and steadily and the numerals on the dial were moving about in small circles.

"No way for a clock to act," he muttered. He put his elbows on the bar and slumped forward. He felt better that way, he discovered.

The bartender leaned toward him.

"What'd you say, huddy?"

"I asked for a drink," Larry said, with considerable dignity. "And, if you aren't busy, you might tell me what time it is."

"Sure thing."

The bartender glanced over his shoulder. "It's 9:05." He poured another drink for Larry.

"Thank you," Larry said solemnly. He suddenly realized what a sterling chap this bartender was. He hinked owlshly.

"You are a scholar and a gentleman," he said, punching the surface of the bar for emphasis.

"The same to you," the bartender said. He watched Larry drain the glass of whisky with slightly apprehensive eyes. "You'd better take it a little easy," he advised. "That stuff you're drinking ain't milk."

Larry digested this information in silence. Somehow it seemed important that he wasn't drinking milk, but he couldn't quite figure out why.

He looked at the clock again but it was still acting foolishly.

The bartender said, "It's 9:10. Have you got a date or something?"

Larry nodded, beaming. He liked this chap more each minute. He liked the way he figured things out and drove right to the heart of an issue.

"What time is your date?" the bartender asked.

Larry was reaching the secretive

stage. He put a finger over his lips and peered up and down the deserted bar.

"Mustn't tell," he hissed in a thick conspiratorial whisper. "McGinty wouldn't want me to tell."

"Who's McGinty?"

"McGinty is the stage manager," Larry confided.

"Are you an actor?" the bartender asked.

LARRY felt a warm, satisfied glow stealing over him and it was not altogether the effect of the liquor.

"Yes," he said, "you might say I am an actor. That is, after a fashion."

"Gee," the bartender said, and the admiration in his voice was sufficiently pronounced to seep through the alcoholic fog that was enveloping Larry. "That's sure interesting," he went on wistfully. "You know I always had a hankering to go on the stage. Making love to pretty girls all day is my idea of nice work, if you can get it."

Larry began to feel unhappy again.

"If you can get it," he said. A tear fell into his empty glass.

"What's the matter?" the bartender asked solicitously.

"I need another drink," Larry said mournfully.

"Okay," the bartender said, reaching for the bottle, "but are you sure you've got time? It's 9:25 right now."

Larry straightened with a jerk.

Nine-twenty-five!

His act was supposed to go on at 9:15!

This realization had a slightly sobering effect on him. Missing an act was one of the unpardonable crimes of show business. Performers who missed their acts inevitably wound up missing their meals. That was as definite as an algebraic equation.

He rose unsteadily to his feet.

"I must be going," he announced, in about the tone of voice Napoleon must have used when his boat set out for St. Helena.

"I hope you're not late," the bartender said.

Larry glanced at the clock. He had sobered sufficiently to read the hands. It was 9:30!

"Hope is a wonderful thing," he muttered. He patted the bartender on the shoulder. "We, who are about to go hungry, salute you."

With that he staggered out of the bar and lurched across the alley to the stage door of the Palace. He felt fine, except for his realization that black doom was awaiting him; and also his knees had an odd tendency to work in reverse.

Fortunately there was no one on guard at the stage door and he was able to slip backstage without being noticed. He saw a small knot of people gathered at the wings watching whatever was happening on the stage and he heard the roars of applause from the theatre audience.

Someone was getting a hand, he thought bitterly.

In the crowd of stage hands and performers gathered at the wings he recognized the stocky belligerent figure of Matt McGinty.

He swallowed guiltily. He had no desire to meet McGinty now. After missing his act, McGinty would be in a mood to strangle him with his bare hands.

WITH commendable stealth, considering the load he was carrying, Larry tip-toed past the group at the wings without being noticed. He crept through the maze of backdrops and ropes until he reached a slit in the curtain, from where he could watch the act on the stage without being observed.

When he peeked through the narrow

opening in the back curtain the sight that met his eyes gave him a distinct start. For in the center of the stage was his puppet booth and, at the angle he was looking, he could see his three puppets going through their paces.

The antics in which they were indulging was not in any way similar to the act he had perfected; but the audience was obviously delighted.

Larry felt as if he had been slugged at the base of the skull with a lead pipe. He had returned to the theatre expecting to have fire and brimstone beaped on his head by McGinty for missing his act. And here was the act going merrily on, apparently not minding his absence one bit.

But who was manipulating the puppets!

The curtain at the back of the booth was drawn and whoever was inside was not visible to Larry. But, whoever he was, Larry knew he was a master.

There was a life-like humor and deftness in the performance of the puppets that exceeded any effect Larry had ever been able to create.

The act was reaching its climax. Already, Larry knew, it had been on several minutes too long, but far from minding, the audience was eating it up.

When the curtain finally came down and the stage hands emerged from the wings and speedily shoved the puppet's booth off the stage, the packed house was shaking to the applause of the audience.

Larry listened to the ovation enviously. *He* had never gotten a reception like that. *He* was lucky if the audience took pity on his efforts and applauded through kindness.

But he did not feel too bitter. For he realized that someone had saved him from a nasty mess. If whoever had stepped into the breach to operate the puppet act hadn't been on hand it would

have been terrible.

McGinty at this moment would be throwing him out the rear door of the theatre with explicit and profane instructions not to come back.

THE stage hands had shoved the puppet booth in to the wings and Larry realized that the least he could do was to thank whoever had saved his neck.

With that thought in mind he emerged from his place of concealment. As he stepped into the view of the crowd in the wings McGinty saw him and strode toward him.

Larry felt a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach.

McGinty stopped in front of him, hands on his hips.

"It breaks my heart to tell you this," he said, "but that was a darn good act." He smiled suddenly and slapped Larry on the back. "What are you looking so scared about? I'm telling you, you laid 'em in the aisles. Listen! They're still clapping. Keep up that kind of work, son, and you'll be out of the bread-and-butter circuits darn soon."

Larry sputtered helplessly. He tried to speak but there were no words to express the weird thoughts that were running crazily through his head.

"What's the matter with you?" McGinty demanded. "You'd think there something wrong about knocking that audience cold like you did."

Without answering, Larry moved dazedly to the puppet booth which was standing in the wings. He drew aside the rear curtain and peered into the small aperture from which the puppeteer manipulated the puppets.

It was empty!

He stepped around to the front of the booth and stared intently at the three puppets who were hanging inertly from the strings which motivated them.

The three figures were carved from wood and cleverly jointed together at knees, elbows and neck. Their small, merry faces were tinted with life-like shades and there were bright glints in their shining eyes, which were made of buttons.

Larry called them Pat and Mike and Tim.

In the act, Pat and Mike were helions, in and out of trouble all the time, while Tim was dutiful and innocent.

But in spite of the fact that Larry sometimes thought of them as having personality and individuality, they were actually three wooden figures, about eight inches high, cleverly fashioned to react to his manipulations.

And that was all.

LARRY took off his hat slowly and ran a hand through his hair. He felt the effects of the liquor deserting him and he didn't like that. He felt that he was going to need something to sustain him.

For there was a great big question in his mind.

Who had manipulated these puppets?

That was the question and, needless to say, there was no answer to it.

McGinty was looking at him closely.

"What's the matter with you?" he demanded. "You act as if you'd been on a binge."

"McGinty," Larry said slowly, "I didn't handle this act. Do you know who did?"

"Huh?" McGinty's voice was incredulous. He leaned forward and sniffed suspiciously. "As I thought. You've been swilling a lot of cheap booze from the smell of you. It's lucky this is your last show tonight. Go home and sleep it off and don't let me catch you drinking on the job again."

"But I know what I'm talking about," Larry said. He felt a peculiar

flutter of panic. "I didn't handle this show. I couldn't have. I wasn't here."

"Who're you trying to kid?" McGinty demanded. "You're out of your head. Sleep it off, I'm telling you."

Larry shook his head weakly and stared at the puppets.

"Maybe they know," he muttered. "I don't."

He turned on his heel and strode toward his dressing room, weaving only slightly from the load he was still carrying.

CHAPTER II

LARRY did a lot of thinking when he got to his dressing room. With an ice pack on his dully aching head he sat at his dressing table staring moodily at his image as reflected in the long, cracked mirror.

And the more he thought about the weird events that had taken place, the more befuddled he became. Maybe he, himself, had manipulated the puppets. Possibly he had been so drunk that he just didn't remember.

He shook his head irritably. That wouldn't wash. He hadn't been *that* drunk. And he had a distinct recollection of having *watched* the act from back-stage.

He couldn't have been in the puppet booth manipulating the marionettes and, at the same time, back-stage watching the show, could he?

No, he told himself decisively, that would have been impossible. So there he was. Stuck.

Stuck, that was, for any reasonable explanation of how the act had managed to go on while he was sitting in a bar a half block away.

He shook his head wearily. Nothing made any sense.

He had reached this conclusion when there was a sudden sharp knock on the

door of his dressing room. The sound of the impatient knock was like a knife driven into each of his eardrums and then twisted slowly.

He jumped involuntarily and the ice pack fell from his head to the floor.

The knock was repeated, sharply, insistently.

Larry winced, and walked to the door.

"Go away!" he shouted. "I just died!"

The door opened and a girl stepped into the room. She surveyed him coolly.

"You look it," she murmured.

Larry goggled at her speechlessly. She was just about the most breathtaking parcel of femininity he had ever inspected. Her eyes were deep and level and their shade would have shamed violets. The top of her smooth-shining blonde head came just about to his shoulders and she was as neatly put together as a Christmas package. She was wearing clothes. Larry was too impressed with the contents of this particular package to notice the details of the trimmings.

"I'm sorry," he stammered. "Won't you please come in?"

This was a somewhat superfluous invitation, for the girl was already in the room and Larry noticed then, for the first time, that she was not alone.

A man was with her. A tall, well-groomed man with a lean, arrogant face and smooth, dark hair that fitted his skull as closely as a velvet cap.

This immaculately turned-out specimen looked about the dressing room with an amused twist to his lips. His attitude was that of slumming royalty.

"I told you this was a mistake," he murmured to the girl.

The girl ignored the remark. She turned directly to Larry and he noticed that her small lovely jaw was squared stubbornly.

"I'm Gloria Manners," she said, "and this is my friend, Dereck Miller."

"How do you do," Larry said.

THE tall creature designated as Dereck Miller ignored the hand that Larry extended and nodded his head carelessly. Larry discovered that he had taken a violent dislike to Dereck Miller. And this was rather unusual, for Larry was the easy-going, cheerful type, who very seldom bothered to have serious emotions about people. Now he found himself thinking rather wistfully of the many interesting things that could happen to the man, what with big cars whizzing about and people dropping flower pots from high buildings. . . .

This pleasant train of thought was derailed abruptly by the girl's next remark.

"I want to hire your services, Mr. Temple, if it can be arranged."

"What?"

"Yes," the lovely girl said, "I saw your act a few minutes ago and I'd like to hire you to perform at a party I'm giving this coming week-end. Would you be interested?"

"Why—why, yes, indeed," Larry said breathlessly. He wasn't thinking of the job so much as the opportunity of seeing this girl again. "Just what sort of a party is it?"

"Quite respectable," the girl said, smiling slightly.

"I didn't mean—"

"That's all right. The party will be given at my father's estate in Pineknoll. You will come down Friday night and bring your equipment with you. The party is on Saturday night and you will have all day Saturday to set up your apparatus. One of the servants will meet you at the train Friday night, if that is agreeable with you."

"Why it sounds perfect," Larry said

enthusiastically.

The tall impeccably clad young man named Dereck regarded the girl with a faintly annoyed expression.

"My dear," he murmured, "are you sure the colonel will approve of what you're doing? After all, I don't imagine that he relishes having just anyone invited out to Pineknoll."

"Father won't mind," the girl said.

"That's big of the old boy," Larry said drily.

The girl put her hand on his arm in an impulsive, contrite gesture. "I'm sorry. Forgive me. You must think we're terribly rude. It isn't that, but Father is somewhat peculiar, but I'm sure you'll get along with him."

"I'll try my best," Larry grinned. The girl's warm sincerity had completely charmed away his feeling of irritation. "He can't be too bad. After all, he's your father."

Dereck coughed and flicked away a spot of dust from his coat sleeve.

"Shall we be going?" He let the question hang meaningfully in the air.

The girl was regarding Larry uncertainly. Finally, as if making up her mind, she held out her hand and smiled.

"We'll be expecting you," she said. "Friday night."

"Righto," Larry said.

The girl smiled again and walked out through the door. Dereck lingered a moment in the doorway.

"Don't presume on a professional relationship, old boy," he said softly. Then, with a final glance of faint contempt about the littered dressing room, he departed.

LARRY turned the remark over in his mind for several seconds and then he shrugged and bent to retrieve his ice pack. When he straightened up, there was a small man standing in the doorway, regarding him with a

cheerful smile.

"Mind if I drop in, chum?" the little man asked.

Larry stared at this new arrival in mild surprise. He was wearing a checkered plaid suit, a green shirt and an orange tie. On his round head he wore a furry cap pulled low over one eye. He was about as inconspicuous as a pink elephant on the morning after.

"Come right in," Larry said expansively. "This is becoming a popular place these days. We'll need stop and go signs if the traffic holds up." He sat down at the dressing room make-up table and balanced the ice pack on his head. "And what can I do for you, little friend?"

The little man stepped into the room and closed the door carefully. He was still smiling and his blue eyes were tiny pin-points of lights in his red-wrinkled face.

"Right nice of you, chum," he said gratefully. "The name is Buggy Rafferty, late of Atlanta and Leavenworth."

Larry blinked in surprise.

"Did you say Atlanta?"

"That's right, chum. And Leavenworth; don't forget Leavenworth."

"I'll try not to," Larry said dubiously. "And what can I do for you, Mr. Rafferty?"

"Aw, call me Buggy," the little man said, with a modest wave of his hand. "I ain't a guy to stand on formality. Particularly with me partners."

"That's very democratic of you," Larry said. "And—" He stopped speaking abruptly as the little man's last remark hit him solidly. "What was that last, again?" he asked.

"Aw, there I go again," Buggy laughed, "gettin' ahead of myself. 'Cause you didn't know we was going to be partners, did you, chum?"

"The idea hadn't occurred to me,"

Larry admitted. And now that you bring it up, I don't find it intriguing. Do you care to elucidate, or do you find it fun being mysterious?"

The little man pursed his lips thoughtfully.

"I guess I'd better tell all," he said.

"That would be nice," Larry said. "Shoot."

"It's like this," Buggy said, "all my life I been on the wrong side of the law and it ain't no fun. They catch me and ship me away to some lousy jug and that's that for five, maybe ten years. I'm sick of it. It's getting boring, that's what it is."

"I'm glad you have seen the error of your ways," Larry said.

"That's what I've seen," Buggy said, nodding vigorously. "The error of my ways and means. My means, in particular, have been lousy with errors, if you get what I mean."

"I'm afraid I don't," Larry said.

"It's like this. A smart crook is a guy who don't get caught; right?"

"That seems logical."

"Now," the little man continued warmly, "the smart crooks who don't get caught didn't just get that way by accident. They figure everything out, they case all the angles and they don't take no unnecessary chances. So they don't get caught, get it."

"It all seems to follow," Larry said. "Pray, go on."

"Okay, chum, listen good. From now on I'm playin' it smart. I'm casing all the angles. I'm figuring all the details. I'm looking before I leap."

LARRY stood up and smiled.

"I think you are in the wrong pew, Mr. Rafferty. While I am naturally delighted with this ambitious attitude of yours, I fail to see how it concerns me. Possibly you could find a more sympathetic attitude at some re-

form school, where the inmates would probably be happy to absorb any little trade secrets you could pass along. As for me, I am on the right side of the law and I find my position comfortable. I am not a reformer by nature but I might suggest that you would do well to join me. It makes for better nerves and sounder sleep to know that the gendarmes are not sniffing on your trail. You are at liberty to correct me if gendarmes do not sniff, but it has been my opinion that they do."

"I ain't talking just to waste my breath, chum," Buggy said quietly. "I got a very definite purpose behind this kind of rambling introduction. You and me, chum, is going into a partnership of sorts. I've got a little deal lined up and I need you bad."

"That is going to make your disappointment more acute," Larry said sadly.

"There ain't goin' to be any disappointment," Buggy said. He was no longer smiling. "That dame that just left here has got a fortune in ice out at her Pineknoll estate."

"Ice?"

"Ice. Diamonds, to you. She's got one in particular that's worth a strip-tease queen's ransom. And I've had me eye on it for months, but I couldn't figure any safe way of cracking into her joint. You see I'm figuring all the angles like I said. I'm playing it smart, waiting till I get a foolproof scheme worked out. And I got it now. But I need you, chum."

"You have been walking in the sun too much and too long, I'm afraid," Larry said. "What makes you think I'd help you steal Miss Manners' valuables?"

"This," Buggy said. He drew out a very large, very ugly looking gun from his pocket.

"My gracious," Larry said, "you'd

have to mount that before you could fire it."

"I do all right with it in my hand," Buggy said cheerfully. "Now are you goin' to be nice, chum?"

"I don't know," Larry said truthfully. He thought a moment. "Would you really shoot me with that thing?"

"It would break my heart," Buggy said, "hut that wouldn't stop me."

"What do you want me to do?" Larry asked.

"That's the spirit, chum. I been tailing Miss Manners for weeks trying to figure out an angle to get into her home without creatin' no suspicions. I was listening outside when she proposed her little deal to you. Now you're goin' to have an assistant when you go down to do your little act."

"But I don't need an assistant," Larry said reasonably.

"This time you do," Buggy corrected him softly. "And said assistant is none other than Buggy Rafferty, late—"

"Of Atlanta and Leavenworth," Larry finished the sentence with a weary sigh.

"THAT'S right, chum. That way I get into the house without any one suspecting a thing. I find this hunk of ice, cop it and hlow. Before it's missed I'll be in South America bein' a good neighbor to some of them Pampas patooties with plenty of chicken feed to feed the chickens. Now, how does it sound to you?"

"Terrible," Larry said.

"That's just an amateur viewpoint," Buggy said equahly. "Anyway, what you think of the idea ain't so important. All you got to do is cooperate."

"Supposing I would go immediately to the police and tell them all that you have told me," Larry said thoughtfully. "What would happen then?"

"A lot of things," Buggy said cheer-

fully. "All of them would be unpleasant and all of them would happen to you. But what good would it do you to squeal? Who'd believe you? You got any witnesses?"

"I have an honest face," Larry said, clutching at straws.

"So have most of the mugs in Alcatraz," Buggy said, grinning.

Larry sighed despairingly. He looked at the big gun in Buggy's hand.

"I can't think with that cannon in my face," he said moodily. "Sight it on something else, will you?"

Buggy slipped the gun back into his pocket.

"Anything to oblige," he said. "But don't forget it's within easy reach."

Larry thought for several minutes and got nowhere. There was nothing he could do about the situation immediately. The only possible course was to string along with Buggy and hope to turn the tables on him before he went south with the beautiful girl's diamonds.

And that course wasn't the best of all possible courses, by a darn sight.

"Okay," he sighed, "get yourself a social security number. You're working for me now. And be ready to leave Friday afternoon for Pineknoll."

"I been packed for weeks," Buggy grinned. He opened the door. "Don't do anything foolish, chum. You wouldn't look nice on a slah."

"You have a good point there," Larry said moodily.

The door closed on Buggy Rafferty.

Larry sighed. In spite of all his trouble, he still wished he knew who had manipulated those damn puppets!

CHAPTERVIII

COLONEL MARMADUKE MANNERS' estate was a vast sprawling affair covering several dozen acres

of choice wooded land, replete with formal gardens, elaborate fountains and bird baths.

The home was built on the crest of a sloping hill. Winding lanes led from the road, through avenues of stately trees, and up to the majestic porticos of the house.

Seen for the first time, the home and grounds were an impressive sight.

Larry and Buggy Rafferty were duly impressed.

They were seated in the rear of a shining oak-paneled station wagon which was driven by an elderly Negro, who had been with the colonel's family for two generations.

Buggy leaned back and sighed expansively.

"Nifty, ain't it?"

The car was winding through stately parks and gardens that surrounded the colonel's home, and in the distance the majestic gables of the house were visible above the tops of the trees.

Larry looked distastefully at his companion. Buggy was wearing a wildly designed sports coat over a mauve turtle neck sweater. A mangled cigar jutted from his mouth.

"'Nifty' is just the word I was thinking of," Larry said dryly.

The Negro driver brought the car to a stop at the side door of the palatial home and Buggy and Larry climbed out. Larry had shipped his puppet hooth down earlier in the week and he was anxious to find out whether it had arrived safely.

The wide, paneled door opened and Gloria Manners appeared. She smiled a welcome to him. She was wearing a trim sports suit and low-heeled oxfords. Her honey-colored hair was carelessly wind-blown.

Larry sighed. Never in his life had he seen anything more exquisite.

"Hello," she said. "Your apparatus

got here yesterday. I had one of the gardeners unpack it and set it up in the sun-room. I hope that was all right."

"That's fine," Larry said. "Saves me a job."

The girl was looking rather curiously at Buggy, who stood beside Larry twisting a red jockey's cap in his big hands.

"Oh, this is my helper, Mr. Rafferty," Larry explained hastily. "I forgot to tell you about him."

"How do you do?" Gloria said. Her eyes were moving in polite astonishment over the little man's incredible clothes.

"Pleased to meet cha, ma'm," Buggy said cordially.

Larry put a hand on his shoulder and smiled innocently.

"Mr. Rafferty does all the heavy work for me," he said. "There won't be anything for him to do since you have taken care of my outfit; so," he patted Buggy on the back, "maybe there's some work around here he can do."

"Well, I don't know," the girl said. She turned to the elderly Negro. "Rastus, will you take Mr. Rafferty to the kitchen?" Maybe you can find something to keep him occupied."

RASTUS rubbed his big, horny hands. He did not approve of Buggy Rafferty and it was obvious that his mistress' assignment gave him deep pleasure.

"Yassum," he said, smiling. "I'll keep him busy. Ain't nobody touched dat woodpile for days now. He can start on dat." He turned to Buggy. "Come on, you."

Buggy looked darkly at Larry.

"Much obliged, chum," he muttered under his breath. He shuffled off after the Negro, the cigar in his mouth wag-

ging angrily.

Gloria took Larry by the arm.

"You must come in and meet Father now."

"Fine," Larry said.

His vague misgivings in regard to the colonel were not eased when he entered into the huge, high-ceilinged library with Gloria at his side, and saw a tall, broad-shouldered old man, with fierce white mustaches standing in front of the fireplace with a great, blue-barrelled rifle in his hands.

The old man had steel blue eyes and a jaw that looked like Gibraltar.

"Shot and shell are for sissies," he was thundering to some invisible auditor as Gloria and Larry entered the room. He waved the huge gun about impatiently. "For a real, honest-to-God battle give me cold steel. A man—"

He broke off in mid-sentence and peered at his daughter.

"Ah, there you are," he said in a milder voice. "Dereck and I were talking about you."

Gloria smiled. "How did I manage to squeeze into a conversation on the relative merits of cold steel and shot-and-shell?"

Dereck stood up and bowed gallantly. He had been seated in a high-backed chair facing the colonel.

"There's room for you, my dear, in any conversation," he said, fairly exuding charm from every pore. He was dressed in formal riding clothes and he seemed to realize that he cut quite a dashing figure.

Gloria led Larry forward.

"Father, this is the young man I was telling you about."

Larry shook hands with the colonel and he found himself staring into a pair of frosty blue eyes that were like chilled lake water.

"Yes, yes," the old man muttered,

"I remember you telling me about him. How are you, young fellow?"

"Fine, thank you, sir," Larry said, breathing a little more easily, as the colonel stood the huge elephant gun against the fireplace.

"What do you do for a living?" the colonel asked bluntly, when he turned back to Larry. He stood with his hands clasped behind his back and his bushy eyebrows were drawn together over his piercing eyes.

Gloria said quickly, "I told you all about him, Father. He's an entertainer. He's going to perform at the party tomorrow night."

"What kind of an entertainer?" the colonel asked.

"I'm a puppeteer," Larry explained apologetically. He didn't know quite why but his occupation suddenly seemed rather shameful.

"A what?"

"A puppeteer, sir. I manipulate puppets by string control and make them do all sorts of things."

THE colonel frowned.

"What sort of things?"

Larry loosened his collar.

"Well, I make them hit each other over the head and walk as if they're drunk and—" His voice trailed off weakly and he cleared his throat desperately. "Things like that," he added feebly. He was all too conscious of how silly his work must seem to a fire-belching colonel.

"I see," the colonel said. He glanced at Dereck and smiled. "Interesting, what?"

"Very," Dereck said smoothly.

"Someone has to keep the women and children entertained while the men are away fighting the war, I suppose."

Larry restrained an impulse to kick Dereck squarely in the stomach. He said nothing of the knee that had

caused his rejection from the Army, Navy and Marines. That was a little something he kept pretty close to himself.

"Of course," Dereck continued smoothly, "when I was fighting in India we were too busy to worry about the morale of the people back home. We had enough trouble staying alive without worrying about anything else."

"You've mentioned that before, Dereck," Gloria said quietly. She turned to Larry. "Maybe you'd be willing to show us how your act works. Sort of a preview of tomorrow night. Everything's all set up in the sun-room, just off the library."

"I'd be glad to," Larry said.

She led him across the library and through an arched doorway into a solarium. His puppet booth was in the center of this room and his three puppets, Pat, Mike and Tim were sprawled on the tiny stage.

Dereck and the colonel followed them, and Larry heard the colonel's clarion voice growling vaguely about a sabre charge in the Crimea in which he participated; and in between these blasts he could hear Dereck's smooth voice relating some bit of personal darning that he had accomplished in the air above Tobruk.

He sighed and there was envy in the sigh. Naturally the old man and Dereck would be as thick as thieves, since they had a sort of military bond between them.

"Oh, they're cute," Gloria cried, as Larry gathered the controlling strings of the puppets in his hands and lifted them to a standing position. With dexterously sensitive fingers he set them jiggling.

The colonel shoved his craggy face close to the dancing puppets.

"I've never seen anything so ridiculous in all my life," he growled.

"They're the most stupid looking things a person could imagine. They look silly. Whoever made them must have been dumb and blind."

His fiercely scowling face was within an inch of the puppet at the left end of the line. This was the puppet Larry had dubbed Mike, because of the mercurially belligerent expression carved on his little wooden face.

An odd thing happened then.

The foot of this puppet flew out with sudden malicious speed.

And its hard wooden shoe landed squarely on the tip of the colonel's red-veined, beaked nose!

THE colonel straightened with a roar that set the floor trembling. He glared in raging accusation at the puppet that had kicked him.

"It—it assaulted me!" he roared.

"Don't be silly, Father," Gloria said soothingly. "How could a puppet do anything like that? They're just little wooden figures. Their actions are completely controlled by Larry."

"So that's it!" the colonel bellowed.

He wheeled on Larry who was still holding the puppets' strings in his hands.

"I presume, young man, that that is your idea of a joke," he shouted wrathfully.

He drew himself up to his full impressive height and his eyes pierced Larry like twin needles.

"It might interest you to know," he said scathingly, "that I happen to regard practical joking as the external expression of a low, perverted intellect."

He turned on his heel and marched stiffly from the room. After a discreet interval Dereck followed suit. His attitude indicated plainly that he shared the colonel's opinion.

Gloria was looking at Larry with wonder in her blue eyes. "Why did

you have to do that, Larry?"

"Do what?"

"Make that puppet kick Father."

Larry's expression was slightly dazed. "I—I didn't. Anyway I don't think I did."

The girl's expression was an interesting blend of exasperation and amusement. "Don't be silly! It could hardly have kicked him of its own accord."

"Yeah," mumbled Larry. "I mean, you're right. But I don't see how—" His voice trailed off.

The entrance of the butler with the announcement that dinner was served, ended the conversation on that note of uncertainty.

Except for the excellent food, dinner proved to be something of an ordeal. The colonel, evidently still smarting from Larry's attempt on his dignity, had drawn into a shell. Dereck managed to monopolize Gloria by means of a steady flow of light conversation that definitely held no place for Larry.

Afterward, the young puppeteer, tired, puzzled and vaguely depressed, slowly mounted the stairs to his room.

He undressed wearily and got into bed. But he couldn't sleep. There were too many disquieting thoughts buzzing about in his head. And chief among these disturbing figments was his concern over what had happened to Mike. He was certainly acting in a peculiar fashion and he could think of no reasonable explanation for the puppet's conduct. If anything happened tomorrow night during the big show. . . .

HE TOSSED restlessly. Sleep seemed an elusive thing that was farther away than ever. When he heard the great clock in the lower hall mournfully chiming two o'clock, he decided that there was no longer any point in

staying in bed.

He got up and slipped into his bathrobe and slippers. He lit a cigarette and sat on the edge of the bed smoking moodily. The cigarette tasted foul. He put it out and lit another.

After a few moments he stood up, deciding that he had better go downstairs and see that everything was all right with his equipment.

He felt better having something definite to do. He put out his cigarette and left his room as quietly as possible. The house was dark and heavy with a tomb-like silence.

Larry found the carved stair banister and guided himself down to the first floor. He picked his way carefully through the library and when he reached the sun-room he turned on one of the floor lamps.

A shadow moved away from the wall. The end of a glowing cigar was visible in the semi-gloom.

"Greetings, chum," a voice said.

"It's you again," Larry said wearily, as Buggy Rafferty moved out into the light, blinking his little eyes against the soft glare.

He was wearing crimson pajamas with a yellow sash and a light tan dressing gown with green felt lapels. His hands were jammed into the pockets of the gown and Larry detected a significant bulge under the right pocket.

"That was a crummy trick you played on me today, chum," he said in an injured voice, "but I ain't sore, honest. This way I gets to gab with the help and find out the lay of the land."

"What are you doing prowling about the house this time of night?" Larry asked stiffly.

"I could ask you the same thing," Buggy grinned. "But I ain't the nosey type. I'm just doin' a little research work, that's all. Checkin' the burglar alarms and things like that. Can't be

too careful these days. That Rastus kept me so busy cuttin' wood and hauling garbage that this is the first chance I got to look the joint over. And from what I've seen, it's goin' to be a lead-pipe cinch."

"How dandy," Larry said gloomily.

Until now he had forgotten about Buggy. He had been so worried about the peculiar behavior of his puppet that all other thoughts had been driven from his mind. His spirits sank. For a while he had been kidding himself with the delightful prospects of seeing Gloria the next day and possibly making hay while the sun shone.

But his name would be mud when Buggy copped her diamonds and blew the country. Naturally he would be held responsible for that. If he escaped a nice smacking twenty-year sentence he'd be lucky.

"Well, be good, chum," Buggy said. "I'm goin' back to my honest slumber. Don't stay up too late."

"Good night," Larry said dully. The chances of Buggy strangling in the bed clothes were too remote to be cheering. All he could hope for was something developing tomorrow that would enable him to pull Buggy's claws.

He would like to do it with pliers, he thought bitterly.

WHEN Buggy had left, Larry turned his attention to his puppet booth. And here he was in for another shock.

The strings that led to two of the puppets were badly twisted and snarled. But that was not the worst.

The two puppets were gone!

Larry felt his scalp prickling with a strange fear. He turned on the high lights in the room and returned to his booth to make a thorough inspection of the damage.

Only one puppet was in evidence.

Tim, the puppet who took the role of the naive, innocent party in the little skits, was still present, but Pat and Mike, the two hellions, were gone without a trace.

Tim was sitting on the edge of the tiny stage, a prop match and cigarette in his hands. There was a peculiarly doleful expression on the little face.

Larry picked the puppet up and examined it carefully. There didn't seem to be anything wrong with it for all the manipulating strings were still attached and in good order.

Larry set Tim on his shoulder and manipulated the wooden arms, legs and neck of the tiny puppet to make sure that everything was in good working order.

He was slightly reassured to discover that Tim at least was all right, but he couldn't put on a show with only one puppet.

He stared bitterly at the deserted stage and the snarled ropes.

"I wonder where the hell they are," he said angrily.

"They're gone," a small voice said in his ear.

"I know that," Larry said irritably, "but where—"

Words jammed up in his throat and stuck there. An unpleasant shudder traveled down his spine.

Had someone spoken?

Or was he going batty?

"I know where they've gone," the small voice said. "They wanted me to go with them but I didn't think it was right."

There was no doubt in his mind now.

He turned his head slowly, carefully, as if he were afraid that his neck might splinter. His eyes met the shining button eyes of Tim, the little puppet.

"Did you say something?" Larry whispered.

"Yes," Tim answered. His voice was

clearly audible. It was small and rough, but not unpleasant. "I said I knew where Pat and Mike have gone. They asked me to come with them but I didn't think it was the right thing to do."

"That's what I thought you said," Larry said weakly. Perspiration was pouring down his forehead in tiny rivulets. His mind felt as if it were rocking on its foundations.

This was incredible! Yet it seemed to be happening.

"Why didn't you go with Mike and Pat?" he asked. It was a silly question but Larry hadn't had much conversational experience with puppets. He was at a loss as to just the right approach.

"I didn't think it would be right," Tim repeated. "I am supposed to act in shows. I want to do what is right."

"I am glad you do," Larry said. He had the inane feeling he was making a perfect fool of himself. The proper procedure, he felt sure, would be to ignore Tim completely and go to bed. This thing couldn't be happening. It was all a product of his imagination.

THEN he remembered the night at the theatre when the puppets had gone through their act without him; and he remembered the scene earlier that evening when one of the puppets had kicked Colonel Manners in the nose.

These recollections gave him pause.

"How long has this been going on," he asked Tim, in what he hoped was a severe voice. But it sounded like a croak to his ears.

"How long has what been going on?" Tim asked.

"This—this nonsense," Larry said. "This business of you puppets taking things into your own hands."

"Not long," Tim answered. "We came to life sort of gradually. The first night was when we put on the show

at the theatre without you."

"So you did that, did you?" Larry asked.

"Yes. We were pretty good, too. Better, I guess, than when you ran things."

"Oh, I don't know," Larry said.

"I didn't think we ought to let anybody know about us coming alive, but I couldn't make Pat and Mike see it my way. They think they're going to have a lot of fun now."

"This is terrible," Larry whispered. "How'd you happen to become animated in the first place?"

"We were made from the wood of a carnivorous tree," Tim explained. "It was inevitable."

"I see," Larry said. If this wasn't the damndest thing!

Another thing occurred to him then.

"Where did Pat and Mike go?" he asked. He felt that he should have asked that question immediately.

"They went to find the nasty man with the white mustaches," Tim answered.

"The colonel?"

"They didn't like him," Tim said. "He called us stupid and silly. Mike and Pat felt very hurt. They were going to do something about it."

"Good God!" Larry groaned. "How long have they been gone?"

"I don't know," Tim said. "I can't tell time."

Larry lifted the puppet from his shoulder and put him back on the stage. He had to stop Mike and Pat somehow.

"What were they going to do to the colonel?" he demanded.

"They were going to puncture the hot water bottle in his bed," Tim giggled. "All they needed was a needle. They figured he would be pretty surprised when the water leaked out in the middle of the night."

Larry groaned. This would certainly

put him in solid with the colonel. The old ram-rod would naturally blame him for anything that happened. The only thing he could do was to try and stop Mike and Pat before it was too late.

He shook a finger sternly at Tim.

"You stay here, you understand?"

"Yes. I am waiting for the show to go on. I want to do what is right."

Larry patted him awkwardly on the shoulder.

"Good boy," he said. "I wish the others were like you."

He switched off the light and hurried back through the library and up the stairs. The upper floors were dark and he had to feel his way along, but he remembered Gloria saying that the colonel's room was across the hall from his own, and that made his job simpler.

He hesitated at the door of the colonel's room. He had a normal amount of courage but there was something about invading the sanctity of the old boy's boudoir that unnerved him. Still, every man has his Rubicon to cross, and Larry was no exception.

With a silent prayer he gently opened the door and eased himself into the darkened room.

CHAPTER IV

THE only sound that disturbed the stillness of the room was the slightly asthmatic breathing of the colonel. This stertorous noise emanated from one corner of the room and Larry rightly presumed that the old gentleman was lying there in bed, enjoying his well-earned rest.

So far so good.

Apparently Mike and Pat hadn't gotten this far.

This comforting thought was blasted an instant later as Larry heard a slight scuffling sound at the foot of the colonel's bed, followed by a muffled snicker.

Pat and Mike were obviously on deck and up to no good.

Larry moved cautiously toward the looming shadow of the bed. Tim had mentioned that the two obstreperous puppets, Pat and Mike, were planning some shenanigans with the hot water bottle at the foot of the colonel's bed.

Obviously the quickest way to circumvent their scheme would be to simply remove the hot water bottle. That, to Larry, seemed the essence of logic.

With this idea in mind he carefully lifted the covers at the foot of the bed and began a cautious search for the bottle.

He felt something bump against his foot and he heard a giggling laugh somewhere from the region under the bed. He swore softly and continued his search, trying desperately to locate the rubber bottle without awakening the colonel.

But the best-laid plans can go awry, as Larry discovered to his sorrow. His hand encountered a welling puddle of water at the foot of the bed and at the same time there was an enraged bellow from the colonel.

Larry froze in his tracks. All of his common-sense instincts were screaming at him to flee; but he was powerless to move. He stood like a man in a trance as the bedclothes thrashed about and the colonel's bulky shadow loomed black against the darkness as he sat bolt upright in bed.

There was a snap of an electric switch and then there was light.

The colonel stared in apoplectic bewilderment at Larry. His white mustaches were bristling with outraged indignation. And in one gnarled hand he held a huge black pistol which was pointed unwaveringly at Larry's midriff.

"What, sir," he said, in a strangled, hoarse voice, "is the meaning of this?"

LARRY made futile efforts to speak. His mouth opened. His tongue went through the accepted motions but no words broke the silence. He waved his hands desperately and eloquently; but it takes a lot of hand-waving to explain anything, let alone a situation as complicated and embarrassing as that confronting Larry.

The colonel watched with the sort of disgusted interest a person might bestow upon a creature scurrying from beneath a damp rock.

"I presume you have something to say," he said with icy deliberation.

Larry continued to flutter his hands helplessly. It was all he could do.

"If those are semaphore signals you may discontinue them," the colonel said with terrible calmness.

He threw back the covers of the bed and stood up, towering like Biblical figure of wrath in his flowing nightdress and disordered white hair.

He inspected the condition of his bed with ominous quiet. His eye moved over the hot water bottle which was punctured in a dozen places with tiny needle pricks; his jaw tightened spasmodically as he viewed the soaked mattress and sheets.

Gleaming guiltily in the center of the spreading patch of dampness was a large darning needle.

The colonel picked up the needle between his thumb and forefinger. He extended it toward Larry.

"Yours, I believe," he said stiffly.

Larry accepted the needle dumbly. His voice was beginning to return to normalcy.

"This is all a terrible mistake," he said. The words popped out in a stuttering rush.

The colonel eyed him coldly from under lowering brows.

"You are absolutely right," he said. "This is a terrible mistake for you, my

young friend." His tone of voice could have been used by a judge sentencing an ax-slayer to life imprisonment.

"You don't understand, sir," Larry said desperately. "I came here to prevent someone from puncturing your hot water bottle."

"So?" The colonel's brows arched coldly. "And who is this 'someone' who was interested in doing that?"

Larry sputtered and again no words were forthcoming. He couldn't explain to the colonel about the animated puppets. The man would think he had lost his mind.

"I can't say," he blurted. "But you must believe me. I didn't do this."

The colonel laid aside his gun and there was a noticeable touch of regret in the gesture.

"One doesn't shoot one's guests," he said quietly. He straightened and looked Larry coldly in the eye.

"Young man, I am a just and tolerant person. I do not believe that I am harsh or vindictive. Let us therefore review the facts as they stand. I am awakened in the middle of the night by a person to whom I have extended the hospitality of my home. I find that person standing at the foot of my bed with a darning needle in his hand. I find the hot water bottle, which I am accustomed to keep at the foot of my bed, punctured in a dozen places and myself, practically inundated by the contents of the aforementioned water bottle. I demand explanations. I receive a barrage of incoherent gibberish accompanied by wild gestures which should, in my considered opinion, be restricted in the future by a straitjacket. Those, briefly and with a commendable lack of profanity, are my conclusions. If you have nothing further to add—"

"WAIT!" Larry cried. He had nothing further to add that would

do him any good, but he didn't want to be shipped off to the Siberian salt mines without raising a finger. "I'll admit things look incriminating but—"

"Young man," the colonel said in a dreadful whisper, "I am reaching certain limits in my capacity to endure your presence. I want you to leave my room. I want you to do without opening your mouth again. And in the morning I shall expect you to leave the premises of my home without a second's delay. In my opinion, you are an addlepated moron who would bite the hand that fed you, wear any man's collar, desert a floundering ship—"

"You are mixing up your metaphors slightly, Colonel," Larry said, in what he hoped was a gaily bantering spirit. He hoped this digression would get the colonel off on a less personal tangent, but he reckoned without the colonel's military trained, one-track mind.

"And furthermore," the colonel continued, gathering steam and pressure with each syllable and apparently not even bearing Larry's diversion, "if you are not out of my sight in five seconds I shall forget my mother's training and shoot you down like a dog!"

This seemed pretty definite. And Larry had no intention of giving the colonel the pleasure of drilling a few holes through him.

He broke for the door at a fast lope. When his hand hit the knob the colonel was reaching for his gun. Larry jerked open the door and closed it behind him with a relieved sigh.

He walked dejectedly to his own room. The fat was in the fire for good, now. On the morrow he would undoubtedly be thrown as far as the colonel's retainers were able to pitch him.

He sat on the edge of the bed and lit a cigarette.

Even the knowledge that Pat and Mike were still in the colonel's room

failed to disturb him. So what? he thought bitterly.

There was even a dry, bitter pleasure in speculating on what the little hellions might do next to bedevil the colonel.

"Maybe they'll put sand in his shaving cream," he thought.

The prospect brought a wan smile to his lips and he climbed into bed. In despair he went to sleep.

CHAPTER V

THE next morning Larry was aroused from his uneasy sleep by a clamor of voices in the hallway outside his room. For a moment he lay in bed blinking at the ceiling, and then as the memory of the previous night flooded over him he groaned softly.

But his thoughts were distracted from his sorry plight for the moment by the babble and confusion that were audibly evident outside his door.

He got out of bed rather nervously. Maybe, he thought worriedly, the colonel had sent up a crew of strong-arm men to toss him out into the cold. But there was no attempt on the part of anyone to enter his room. Footsteps rushed back and forth outside his door; voices were raised and lowered, but through the discordant din Larry recognized one particular voice that surged over and above the others like the major theme in a symphony.

This predominant voice was unmistakable. Once having heard it the chances were good that a man would recognize it on his death bed.

For it was the voice of Colonel Manners raised in rage and anguish!

Larry listened for a few seconds with a sort of grudging admiration. The old boy really had a set of pipes! And he was surpassing himself this morning.

He wondered what had caused the outburst. For a while he toyed with



The puppet lit a match on his shoulder

speculations but finally his curiosity got the better of him and he put on his robe and slippers and headed for the door.

Half-way there he was arrested by the sound of a voice. A jolly voice which said, "You'd better keep away from the colonel for a while."

Larry stopped in his tracks and then turned slowly.

Seated on his dresser were two small figures surveying him with bright, sparkling eyes. Larry recognized them instantly as Pat and Mike, the incorrigible puppets who had been missing from the booth the previous night.

They were fashioned the same as Tim, with cleverly jointed wooden arms, legs and bodies, but there was an unholy gleam in their button eyes that was lacking in Tim's.

"What have you little devils been up to?" Larry demanded. "What have you done to the colonel now?"

Pat looked at Mike and a malicious grin split his mischievous features.

"He wants to know what we did to the colonel," the puppet said to his companion.

Mike grinned too. "Tell him to go and ask the colonel," Mike said. "And then tell him he'd better duck."

Larry crossed the room in two quick strides and swept the puppets up in his hands. They struggled and kicked in helpless fury.

Larry glared at them. "I'm through playing around with you boys," he said grimly. "I'm going to see to it that you behave."

He jerked open the top drawer of the dresser and dumped them in on top of his shirts. Then he closed the drawer and locked it. He put the key in his pocket.

"That'll hold you," he muttered.

He could hear their faint cries from inside the drawer, but he hardened his

heart and strode away. Opening the door of his room he stepped out into a scene of wild confusion.

SERVANTS rushed back and forth with tense worried looks stamped on their faces. Larry noticed Dereck Miller pacing nervously in front of the colonel's door.

"What's up?" he asked.

Dereck chewed his lip anxiously.

"Hell to pay," he said tensely, "the old boy's lost his false teeth."

"You don't say," Larry murmured.

Gloria appeared at that moment from the opposite end of the corridor. She was wearing a silver lace negligee and her bare feet were thrust into tiny silver mules.

"My maid just told me the bad news," she said breathlessly. "We've got to do something."

From inside the colonel's room the wild bellowing was reminiscent of the trumpeting of a frustrated huff elephant. There was something terrifying and cosmic about the uproar issuing from the open transom.

Dereck put his hand on Gloria's arm comfortingly.

"We'll find them," he said. His jaw was dramatically tense.

The door was suddenly flung open and the colonel appeared, a wild tragic figure. His hair was flying about his head and sparks of rage were shooting from his eyes.

The sight of Larry acted like a match touched to gasoline on the colonel. He raised his clenched fists in the air and screamed like a denested eagle.

"This is your work," he bellowed. "Where are my teeth?"

This appeal lost a bit of effectiveness since the colonel's lips were writhing about loosely without the support of his store teeth. But the general idea got across.

"I don't know—" began Larry.

"Get my teeth!" thundered the colonel.

Larry had a pretty good idea of what had happened to the colonel's teeth. Pat and Mike had obviously copped them during the night. But Larry felt no particular desire to leap to the aid and succor of the colonel. In his opinion the old goat richly deserved whatever bad luck befell him and he was about to voice this sentiment when Gloria took his arm.

"Please," she whispered, "If you can help him, I'll be eternally grateful."

Larry looked at her and his hard-hearted resolve melted. With her hair sleep-tumbled about her face she was as lovely as a morning rose.

"I'll do what I can," he said.

"Get my teeth, you scoundrel," belated the colonel, hopping from one gouty foot to the other in his rage.

Larry ducked back into his room and opened the drawer in which he had imprisoned the two puppets. He lifted them out paying no attention to their shrill accusing squawks.

"Okay," he said, when they had exhausted their repertoire of abuse, "we're through playing games. Where are they?"

"Where are what?" Mike asked surlily.

"Don't play dumb," Larry said sharply. "I want the colonel's teeth. Give!"

"I don't know what you're talking about," Pat mumbled.

"Oh, yes you do," Larry said grimly. "And you're going to tell me where they are."

"Supposing we don't?" Mike said sullenly.

LARRY picked up his cigarette lighter from the top of the dresser. He flicked on the light and watched the

blue-hot flame lick greedily into the air.

The two puppets watched the flame also, and there was a sudden anxiety in their button-like eyes.

"I am not a monster," Larry said calmly, "but I would have no scruples about giving each of you fellows a hot-foot, if necessary, to find out what I want to know. A hot-foot in your case would probably be fatal, but I can't help that."

Mike twisted uneasily in his hand. Pat did likewise.

"Who wants any old false teeth?" Mike said suddenly.

"I don't," Pat said promptly.

"Start talking," Larry said.

"They're in the top drawer," Mike said. "Please put out that lighter. It's giving me heart burn."

Larry put out the lighter and tossed the puppets back into the drawer beside his shirts. He closed the drawer and locked it. Then he opened the top drawer and the first sight that met his eyes was the colonel's very large, very white and very false set of teeth.

With them in his hand he returned to the excited group clustered about the colonel's drawer.

Gloria saw him first. Her eyes lighted when she saw the teeth in his hand.

"Oh, you're wonderful!" she cried.

The colonel stamped out of his room and when he saw his teeth in Larry's hand he grabbed them like a wolf snatching meat from a trap.

He fitted them into his mouth and then he swung on Larry. His mouth opened and closed. His face purpled with his efforts at speech.

Finally he gave up.

He pointed toward the door.

"Go!" he blazed. The word seemed to seep up from the soles of his feet and it had collected plenty of venom by the

time it passed through the colonel's body and cracked out in the air about Larry's ears.

"You said it more effectively last night," Larry said dryly.

With an indignant wheeze the colonel padded back into his room. Larry was about to do likewise, sans the indignant wheeze when Gloria put her hand on his shoulder.

"Please don't go yet," she said hurriedly. "I'm sure I can talk Father out of his bad mood. We need you for the show tonight. I'll be in a terrible mess if you don't stay. Please, just for me?"

What could Larry do?

He shrugged. "Okay. But I'll be packing just in case."

"I'll meet you downstairs in the main hallway in a half hour," Gloria said. "Everything's going to be all right. Don't worry."

"I stopped worrying hours ago," Larry said ironically. "It's up to Fate now."

Gloria smiled comfortingly at him and then went into her father's room and closed the door. Larry shrugged and went back to his own room to begin packing. There was only one thing he was worried about.

The colonel might shoot Gloria.

The fact that she was his daughter would probably be only an extra inducement to the fire-belching, hard-headed, stiff-necked old goat!

CHAPTER VI

LARRY was waiting in the hallway when Gloria came down the wide curving steps, smiling triumphantly.

"Everything's all set," she said. "I explained to Father that we simply couldn't do without you tonight, and since the proceeds of the party are for Army relief, he couldn't very well say no."

She had changed into a simple tweed suit, but he had never seen her looking quite so fresh and lovely.

"You look sweet enough to ration," he grinned.

She looked at him quickly, slightly startled. Then she smiled. "Isn't it a little early in the morning for pretty speeches?"

"In your case," he said, "I don't imagine it's ever too early. The average girl doesn't look quite up to par in the morning, but you look as if you'd spent the night sleeping in the bell of a flower."

"If I had," she laughed, "I'd be wrinkled and messy and have dew in my hair."

She glanced out the window.

"It's raining a little, but it's still a nice morning. Would you like to take a walk before breakfast? You haven't seen any of the grounds yet."

"Sounds like a wonderful idea," Larry said. He felt his spirits not only rising, but soaring. That was what a few seconds of this lovely girl's company did to him, he thought with a slight touch of wonder.

In spite of all the things that happened and were still scheduled to happen he felt illogically and gloriously happy. When Buggy Rafferty and the puppets got through with him this evening, he would probably be slated for free room and board at Atlanta for the next few years, but he didn't give a damn. Right now he was going for a walk with the most beautiful girl in the world and it had been *her* suggestion.

Maybe he did have a chance. The thought that this glorious creature could ever return his affection was crazy and untinkable but Larry, being human, felt hope kindling in his heart.

She got him an umbrella and they went outside. The air was bracingly

keen and the misting rain transformed the grounds into a dewy fairyland. On the eastern horizon the sun was crawling sleepily from a blanket of soft clouds and the first long lances of light created a million diamond-bright sparklings in the wet trees and grass.

Larry breathed deeply.

"Wonderful, isn't it?" the girl said.

"Absolutely tops." He grinned down at her. "Let's take a look at the gardens. Maybe I can find that flower you slept in last night."

"I hope you don't," she said. "I forgot to make the bed."

THEY walked hand in hand across the smooth, landscaped lawn until they came to the riotously colorful gardens. Under the shelter of a lane of trees, they paused. She stood close enough to him so that when he leaned forward a soft strand of hair blew across his face.

She turned slightly and looked up at him, her eyes dark and serious.

"I was wondering," she said softly, "why this has been so much fun. Is it just the garden and the rain, or is there some other reason?"

"I think there's another reason," Larry said. He knew that this was his moment of opportunity and it might never come again. He put his hands on her slim shoulders and smiled down into her eyes.

"What reason is that?" she asked, and her voice caught breathlessly on the words.

Larry started to say the things that had been in his heart forever, but before he could open his mouth he felt a sharp dig in his left ankle.

He winced involuntarily; but the girl didn't notice. Her eyes were closed and her lips were slightly parted.

Larry glanced down and saw Tim standing on the ground between his

feet, carrying a postcard which was bigger than he was. A sharp flash of panic stabbed him. This was no time for Gloria to find out about his animated puppets.

He shoved Tim away with his foot, but the little puppet returned doggedly and began pulling at his trouser leg.

"What were you going to say, Larry?" Gloria asked softly.

Larry shook Tim loose and kicked him as gently as possible into the bushes that bordered the trees.

"I was going to say we'd better be going," he said hoarsely. "It's raining. Might get wet."

Gloria opened her eyes. A spot of color appeared in each cheek. She stared for an instant at Larry with eyes that were hurt and angry.

"I'm sorry I've kept you out," she said evenly. "Forgive me."

She turned and walked quickly away through the rain toward the house. Larry started after her, but a small voice checked him.

Tim was crawling out of the bushes still carrying the postcard.

"What's the idea?" he demanded in an injured voice.

"I might ask you the same question," Larry said bitterly. "You've just ruined the best love scene since 'Birth of a Nation'."

"I am determined to be useful," Tim said doggedly.

"What are you doing with that postcard?"

"I am delivering it. Mail must be delivered and I am determined to be useful."

Larry bent down wearily and took the postcard from the little puppet. It was not addressed to him. It was addressed to the colonel.

"This isn't for me," he said disgustedly.

"I don't know much about mail yet,"

said Tim, "but I can learn."

"Stop trying to be useful," Larry said. "Go back to the booth and keep out of trouble. I've got enough on my mind without having to worry about you."

"Fine thing," Tim said disgustedly. "There's no room for private initiative any more. That's what the WPA did."

"Scat!" Larry said.

Tim trudged off moodily in the direction of the house and Larry was left alone with the misting rain and the garden. The rain got down his neck and the garden looked like a surrealist's nightmare.

He shivered and went back to his room.

There he made another disquieting discovery.

Pat and Mike were gone. Somehow, they had gotten out of the drawer. There was no way of knowing where they were or what sadistic devilment they were planning.

"Nuts!" said Larry Temple, distinctly and loudly.

CHAPTER VII

FORMALLY clad guests began arriving at about eight o'clock that evening for Gloria's party. There was a bustle and stir in the big home as servants moved quickly about, passing drinks and answering the door. At the foot of the broad winding stairs stood the colonel and Gloria, greeting the guests as they arrived.

The colonel wore evening clothes and his left breast was decorated with silk ribbons and various campaign stripes. He looked very distinguished and every inch the great retired soldier as he bowed and smiled to the women and shook hands with the men.

Gloria, at his side, was a ravishing vision in a gleaming white formal that

transformed her slender body into a flowing picture of perfection. Suspended from her slender throat was a magnificent diamond.

But while she smiled and chatted readily with the stream of guests that passed, there was sadness in the haunting depths of her eyes.

Larry noticed all this from the top of the stairs.

He was standing there in the semi-darkness trying to work up enough courage to go down and face the crowd and Gloria and the colonel. Particularly the colonel.

The puppets were still missing; Buggy Rafferty had not yet disclosed what his plans were for the evening; and the colonel would most likely shoot on sight. But Larry had almost reached the saturation point as far as worry was concerned. He had been through too much. With a fatalistic shrug he decided to let the future take care of itself.

He descended the stairs slowly.

Gloria looked up at him and for an instant there was a strange light in her eyes. Then she composed her features in a polite mask and smiled coldly.

"Nice of you to come down," she murmured. "The entertainment is scheduled to start at nine o'clock, you know."

"I can hardly wait," Larry said drily.

The colonel turned to him with a smile and extended his hand.

"Nice to have you with us tonight, sir. Please make yourself at home and feel free—"

He recognized Larry then and his hand fell to his side. The smile hardened on his craggy face. His mustaches bristled alarmingly.

"Will you be good enough to remove yourself from my presence," he snarled. "I refuse to be responsible for the consequences if I am forced to endure more

of your company, sir!"

LARRY regarded the colonel for an instant with level eyes. He was getting thoroughly fed up with this pompous old goat's domineering bluster.

"I suggest, sir," he said courteously, "that you take a running jump in the lake for yourself."

He turned and strode away, deriving some consolation from the startled, incredulous expression that had registered on the colonel's seamy features.

He avoided the groups of drinking guests in the drawing room and went on through the library into the sun room. There he stared gloomily at his puppet booth. Tim was seated on the stage looking rather blue, but of Pat and Mike there was no sign.

A door opened and Buggy Rafferty appeared.

"Hiya, chum?" he said affably.

Larry looked at the man and winced. He was wearing a camel's hair sport coat and green slacks. A yellow tie stood out gruesomely against a red shirt. He was smoking his inevitable cigar and packing his inevitable pistol.

"Nice to see you again," Larry said.

"Tonight's the night," Buggy said cheerily. "I got everything set. Did you notice that diamond pendant the filly is wearing?"

"You mean Miss Manners, I presume?"

"Don't get hoity-toity. It ain't becoming. That rock is what I got my eyes on. And everything is set perfectly."

"Fine," Larry said despairingly. He left the sunroom moodily.

He wandered into the drawingroom and observed the antics of the guests with a gloomy eye. In a corner of the room, Dereck, sleek and immaculate in tails, was spellbinding an awed group

of young girls with tales of his exploits on far-flung and perilous battle fronts.

They were listening in thrilled fascination.

Larry sauntered past and Dereck's smooth effective words reached him.

"... the Messerschmidt, I dare say, thought I was a goner. And at that particular moment I would have agreed with him. But . . ."

Larry drifted on and Dereck's voice faded out. He felt no curiosity as to how Dereck had escaped the Nazi trap. The fact that he obviously had, destroyed his interest in the story.

He was standing in a deserted corner of the room, wondering how his personal and professional problems would eventually work out when he saw Gloria walk to the center of the room and raise her hands for attention.

Her announcement was brief.

"We have an interesting surprise for you," she smiled at the guests. "From Broadway, we have been fortunate enough to secure the services of a very talented young man and he is now going to amuse us as only he can."

She waved her hand toward the sunroom and two servants appeared shoving the puppet booth into the center of the room. With a graceful gesture she pointed to Larry, who was standing miserably against the wall.

"I think the young man deserves a hand," she said brightly. "After all, he's had nothing to do all day but walk around in the rain and that can't have been very interesting."

LARRY moved out from the wall and bowed as the guests clapped politely. Walking past Gloria he murmured, "Keep your punches legal, chum."

He proceeded to the puppet booth like a man marching the Last Mile. There was no way in the world he could

put on an act with only Tim and he had no idea of where the other puppets, Pat and Mike were. They hadn't put in an appearance since escaping from the drawer in his room that morning.

Delaying the inevitable moment when he must confess to these people that there wasn't going to be any performance, he inspected carefully the strings that led to Tim. They were all in order. He fiddled around a little longer and he was conscious of a murmur of faint impatience from the guests.

He felt the back of his neck getting warm.

Dereck's smooth voice drifted to him. "Our puppeteer seems to be having trouble. Out of puppies, I presume."

This didn't help any.

Finally he quit stalling. There was nothing to do but tell them the truth and then get the hell out of here. He turned and faced the roomful of expectant guests.

"I'm sorry," he said, "but—"

He got no farther for at that instant the lights suddenly went out and the room was plunged into darkness. There was a startled scream from a girl and a babble of men's voices, over which the commanding tones of the colonel rode easily.

"Don't be alarmed!" he bellowed, in a voice which would have terrified the stoutest heart. "The lights will be on in a moment."

There was an uneasy rustle of movement in the crowd of guests and excited whispers flitted through the darkness.

Then from the center of the room there was a frightened gasp and a voice cried, "Someone's stolen my necklace!"

Larry recognized the voice as Gloria's.

"Somebody turn those damn lights on," he shouted. He moved as quickly

as he could through the darkness toward the sound of her voice. Someone collided with him, but before Larry could recognize the dim shape, the fellow had slipped past and was gone.

Then the lights went on again, as suddenly as they had gone out, and the roomful of guests stared at one another, blinking in the bright illumination.

LARRY was standing directly in front of Gloria and he saw that her hands pressed against her throat and that the diamond pendant was gone. She was staring at him with wide eyes, dark and troubled against the whiteness of her face.

The colonel charged into the scene at that moment and with him was a dapper little man in a tuxedo.

"Are you all right, child?" the colonel demanded.

"Y-yes, I'm all right," Gloria said slowly. She was still staring at Larry. "The moment the lights went out someone stepped up to me. I felt his hand at my throat for a second—and then my diamond pendant was gone."

The dapper little man stepped forward. His eyes were sharp and hard.

"I'm representing the Allied Insurance Company, Miss Manners. I was sent here when the company learned that you were intending to wear your diamond tonight." He looked at her keenly. "Why did you say you felt 'his' hand at your throat. Did you recognize the thief as a man?"

Gloria nodded slowly. She turned her eyes away from Larry.

"I know it was a man," she said.

"Did you recognize him?" the insurance detective asked.

Gloria shook her head. "No." She said the one word in a low voice.

Larry happened to glance through the arched doors that led to the hallway and he noticed a glaringly conspicuous

figure moving toward the front door.

The conspicuous figure was Buggy Rafferty and he was tiptoeing toward the door as if he were walking on eggs. No one else had seen him.

"Just a minute, Buggy," Larry said in a loud, clear voice.

Buggy halted in mid-step, his hand on the doorknob.

Larry nudged the insurance detective. "There's your man," he said.

Buggy turned slowly and faced the roomful of guests. His red, wrinkled face wore a look of faint surprise.

"Did someone call me?" he asked innocently.

The insurance detective looked uncertainly from Larry to Buggy.

"You'd better come in here," he said. "I'd like to ask you a few questions."

Buggy came slowly into the room twisting his hat in his hands.

"Is anything the matter?" he asked. His little eyes were wide with innocent surprise. Larry began to feel slightly uneasy.

"Miss Manners' necklace has been stolen," the detective said.

"You don't say so!" Buggy said indignantly. He shook his head sorrowfully. "That's too bad."

Larry said, "You can stop acting innocent, Buggy. Hand over the necklace."

Buggy looked at him as if he hadn't heard aright.

"What an awful thing to say, Mr. Temple," he said sadly. "I—"

"Search him!" Larry said. But he was beginning to feel that something was radically wrong. And a few minutes later when the detective had gone through Buggy's pockets and found nothing—he knew that something was wrong.

The detective looked at Larry with unconcealed irritation.

"You had better be more careful with

your accusations," he said sharply.

DERECK moved into the picture then, shoving Larry slightly as he stepped into the circle surrounding Gloria.

"Our puppeteer must be forgiven," he said ironically. "The exciting nature of his work keeps him in a rather unbalanced state. I have a suggestion to make that should straighten this mess out without any more delay. No one has left the room since the lights went on. Therefore I propose that we search those present. I, for one, am willing."

There was a general murmur of assent from the guests.

"A capital idea," the colonel said. He cleared his throat importantly. "And I insist that I be searched first."

No one cared to dispute this honor with him, and the detective searched him quickly and deftly. Nothing was found.

"You're okay," the detective said.

"I thank you, sir," the colonel said, with the air of a man who had been exonerated in a dramatic jury trial.

The detective then began searching the others, and the colonel moved along the line with him, ready to pounce on the thief if he should be revealed.

Buggy was standing next to Larry.

"Nice little double-cross, chum," he said from the corner of his mouth.

"I would rather not discuss the matter," Larry said. His thoughts were on the missing diamond. If Buggy didn't have it on his person, he must have hidden it somewhere. But where? He would have to find out before Buggy disappeared with a clean bill of health—and the diamond.

The colonel and the detective would be searching them in a few moments now. They were only two guests away from Buggy and Larry.

Larry was in a hurry to get the thing over with. Impatiently he shoved his hands into his coat pocket. There was a round hard object in his right pocket. His fingers closed around it slowly.

His face began to get hot. There was suddenly a cold vacuum where his stomach should have been. Cautiously he removed his hand from the pocket and peeked at the object nestling in his fingers.

And he almost fainted on the spot.

For the object in his hand was Gloria's pendant necklace!

How the diamond had gotten there, he couldn't imagine; but he knew that this was not the time to speculate on such academic questions. The colonel and the detective were searching Buggy now and in an instant they would be going through his pockets.

He had to get rid of the diamond and he didn't have a second to lose. While he was casting about feverishly in his mind for something more practical than popping the damned thing into his mouth, he felt a tug on his trouser leg.

GLANCING down, he saw the tiny figure of the puppet, Tim, standing next to his shoe peering up at him. Larry shoved him away impatiently. This was no time for irrelevancies. And anything not definitely relating to the speedy disposition of that incriminating diamond was damned irrelevant.

But he reckoned without Tim's persistence. The tug was repeated, determinedly.

"I want to so something useful," Tim's tiny voice floated up to him. "I am tired of being idle. I want something to do."

An idea born of desperation popped into Larry's head. The detective was turning to him when, with a fervent prayer, he dropped the diamond pendant to Tim. He couldn't risk a glance

to see what Tim would do with it.

All that was left to him was hope.

He met the detective's sharp gaze with what blandness he could muster.

The colonel breathed noisily as he regarded Larry.

"Search this man carefully," he ordered the detective. "He looks like the criminal type to me."

"Teeth comfortable?" Larry inquired pleasantly of the old man. The remark scored a direct hit. The colonel's cheeks flushed a violent pink. His fists clenched spasmodically.

"I wish I had you in my company for one day, young man," he fumed. "I'd teach you the meaning of respect to your elders."

"A man who expects respect simply because of his age, is headed for the grazing grounds of senility," Larry said pleasantly. "According to your theory, sir, an Egyptian mummy should be practically idolized."

The detective completed his search and turned to the colonel.

"Nothing there," he said.

The colonel controlled his disappointment manfully, but his attitude indicated clearly that if Larry were innocent it was only because someone else had beaten him to the diamond.

"Harrumph!" he growled and moved after the detective.

Larry looked up and saw Gloria watching him. She dropped her eyes quickly but not before he noticed the radiant light of relief that seemed to illuminate her face.

The detective was searching Dereck and Larry turned to watch the procedure. Dereck was smiling pleasantly.

"Look carefully," he said. "I shouldn't want you to overlook anything."

"I won't," the detective said, and there was suddenly a grimmer note in his voice. He knelt quickly and fum-

bled at Dereck's trouser cuff for an instant and then stood up. The smile was gone from his face.

In his hand he held Gloria's pendant necklace.

"You weren't so smart, after all," he snapped.

There was an incredulous gasp from the assembled guests.

"There's some mistake!" the colonel roared.

Dereck's face was as pale as ivory.

"I agree with you, Colonel," he said smoothly. "There has been a mistake made and our clever detective has made it. He should have drawn his gun."

A SHORT, ugly revolver appeared magically in his own hand. He snatched the necklace from the detective's hand, backed away a pace, swinging the gun about to cover the entire room.

"You stupid fools," he said mockingly, "you fell for my charming line without hesitation, didn't you?" His eyes were cool and dangerous as he backed toward the archway leading to the hall. "I shouldn't advise any of you to attempt to follow me. It won't be healthy." He smiled ironically. "And you can spare yourself the effort of phoning the police. I took the precaution of cutting the wires before I turned the lights out."

Larry listened in dazed disbelief. Dereck had stolen the diamond in the first place, not Buggy. Then he had planted it on him, when the search started, probably intending to recover it somehow. But Tim had deposited the pendant in Dereck's trouser cuff, thus reversing the situation again.

And now Dereck was about to make his getaway. Larry tensed himself and moved forward instinctively, but Dereck's gun swung around to cover him.

"Don't try to be a hero," Dereck said coldly. "Frankly I would enjoy shooting you."

Larry stopped in his tracks and Dereck backed toward the hallway.

"Au revoir, my stupid friends," he smiled.

A figure stepped out from the hall behind Dereck and rubbed his knuckles carefully. This figure was dressed like a rainbow and there was an expression of scientific detachment on his wrinkled face as he measured the distance to a spot just back of Dereck's ear.

His arm came down in a swift chopping stroke and on the end of that arm there was a clenched fist, as hard as rock and twice as effective.

Dereck's eyes spun crazily at the moment of impact. The gun slipped from his fingers and he toppled slowly to the floor.

"Neat, eh?" Buggy Rafferty smiled at the guests.

Larry stepped forward quickly and his hand closed over the diamond pendant a split second before Buggy's. Buggy drew back and straightened up sheepishly.

"Too late again," he said mournfully.

"You aren't a crook at heart, I'm afraid," Larry grinned.

"That hurts," Buggy said, sighing heavily. "I guess I'll go now. I was just making my exit when they found the diamond on this lug. I couldn't let him get away with it."

"Why not?" Larry asked.

Buggy shrugged. "I don't know. Professional jealousy, I guess."

LARRY turned and handed the necklace to the detective from the insurance Company and then he looked for Gloria, but she was nowhere in sight.

Excusing himself, he hurried through

the library and into the sun-room. On the veranda that bordered this room he found her. She was leaning against one of the wooden columns, regarding the moon with a rather belligerent expression on her small face.

"Hello," he said.

"Hello yourself."

"They found the diamond."

"I know. Go away."

Larry moved around in front of her and put his hands on her bare shoulders. They were cold to his touch.

"Let me get you a wrap," he said. "You'll catch cold out here."

"Never mind. I'm going up to my room now. Good night."

"Please don't go," Larry said desperately. "There's something I want to tell you."

"I am not interested," Gloria said in a small voice. Her lower lip was trembling. "Take your hands off me. I'm going."

Larry sighed. "All right," he said, dropping his hands to his side. "Go ahead."

A metallic snap broke the quietness. Gloria looked up at him suddenly, a startled, half-frightened expression on her face. She had been leaning against a veranda post and now she straightened up, a funny, scared look in her eyes.

"Larry," she said, "I—"

"You were going to your room," Larry reminded her coldly. "Please do not let me keep you."

She leaned back, her arms behind her, around the post.

"What were you going to tell me?" she asked.

"I forget. Are you going or aren't you?"

"I can't," she said in a muffled voice.

"You can't? You're being silly.

What's keeping you?"

"These." She turned slightly and Larry's eyes widened in surprise as he saw that her slender wrists were securely handcuffed behind the post.

And sitting on the veranda railing, legs crossed, was Tim.

"Did you do this?" Larry demanded.

Tim nodded. "I had to do something to keep her from leaving. Do your stuff."

The angry glint in Larry's eyes faded slowly. There was good sense in what Tim said.

"Scat, chum," he said. "I can take over from here."

Tim moved away. "I found Pat and Mike, by the way."

"Where?"

"In the garden." Tim shook his head sadly. "A woodpecker got 'em."

"Excellent," Larry said contentedly.

He took the girl in his arms.

"This is a terrible advantage to take," he smiled, "but there's nothing much you can do about it."

He kissed her soundly and was not too surprised that she kissed him back. She closed her eyes and sighed.

"It's too bad all prisoners aren't treated as nicely," she murmured.

"We'll have those cuffs off in a jiffy," Larry said, "I want to trade them for a smaller size that comes in the single model for the third finger, left hand."

"Darling!" Gloria cried.

She was silent a moment for the excellent reason that her lips were engaged in another pastime. Finally she said, "Darling, who were you talking to a moment ago?"

Larry grinned at her. "One of my puppets."

She laughed merrily.

"You say the funniest things, darling."

NEXT MONTH: "They Gave Him a Rope," by H. B. CARLETON

VIGNETTES OF FAMOUS SCIENTISTS

By ALEXANDER BLADE

Buffon

He was a naturalist. His great work was the famed 44-volume "Natural History" which ranked as a classic for a half-century

GEORGES LOUIS LECLERC, Comte de Buffon, was born at Monthard, in central France, on September 7, 1707. He was liberally educated at the college of Jesuits at Dijon, where he made the acquaintance of a young Englishman, Lord Kingston, and traveled with him through Italy and England. His father was an eminent lawyer and wished his son to follow this profession; but Buffon showed a strong liking for the sciences and devoted all his early life to the study of mathematics, physics, and agriculture. His principal work entitled "Natural History" in 44 quarto volumes was published in the years between 1749 and 1804, a part being completed after his death, and for nearly a half-century after was ranked as a classic. It was the first work of its kind in which all the current knowledge of the day on the subject was collected and related in an interesting and non-technical way and it was also illustrated with very fine pictures.

In no sense of the word was Buffon a scientist, not being by inclination or training either an observer or an investigator of natural phenomena. At the age of 25 he inherited a considerable amount of money from his mother. Possessing wealth, social position, and an attractive personality, he devoted the whole of his maturity to studies in mathematics, literature and physics, and thus acquired a standing among students and investigators. In 1739 he was elected a member of the Academy of Sciences and also appointed keeper of the Royal Gardens and Museum in Paris, out of which were subsequently formed the Museum of Natural History and the Jardin des Plantes. Here he lived for several months of each year, in a large house, which is still standing, and which after his death became successively the lodging place of many famous naturalists. In this pleasant environment he passed his winters and made those natural history notes which, during the summer, he worked up so delightfully at his ancestral home at Monthard.

In 1752 he married Marie Françoise de Saint-Belin, and felt deeply her death in 1769. He himself died in Paris at the age of 81, of vesical calculus, having refused to allow any doctor to operate. He left one son who became an officer in the French army and was executed on July 10, 1793, at the age of 30, for political reasons.

Buffon was a compiler and popularizer of scien-

tific matters, which he presented in an attractive, even brilliant, way, and upon which he framed theories and generalizations, some of which were notable as foreshadowing the evolutionary notions of the succeeding generation. As a collector of information gathered by others, he performed a notable service for the increase of knowledge in his day among the masses to whom, for many years after his death, his volumes were standard publications on their subject. Even among scientists they met with favor for, making no pretense of being one himself, he gave expression in them to many thoughts which later bore interesting and valuable fruit. For example, he called attention to the fact of the presence and absence of certain varieties of animal life in certain parts of the world, as elephants in Hindustan, the East Indian Isles and Africa coupled with their total absence elsewhere; the confinement of the lion to Africa; the wide distribution of the deer family, excepting Africa, where only two varieties have been found, and they only in the northern part, while the antelope is particularly abundant throughout the whole continent; and other similar oddities. He intimated that when the subject was thoroughly worked up it should lead to reliable conclusions as to the past history of the different and disconnected parts of the land surfaces, a view that has been verified since then.

However, scattered through Buffon's work are passages of speculation and suggestion, which seem accidentally thrown out rather than carefully considered, and which are often so tinged with irony as to make it difficult for the modern critic to determine whether their author really believed what he said. However, it must be remembered that he lived at a time when it was still unwise, if actually not safe, to express publicly opinions that ran to any great extent contrary to the orthodoxy of the day. In spite of this there may be found in his volumes remarks which may be construed into a belief in the mutability of species, and of their derivation by descent and variation from earlier forms, and thus anticipatory of the theories later advanced by Lamarck and Darwin.

Dr. A. S. Packard, who collected all the views of Buffon bearing upon biological evolution, makes the following statement regarding Buffon's views: "... though not epoch-making, they are such as will render Buffon's name memorable for all time."

Club of the



Devlin was dead; a member of the club of damned men. But he had the choice of living again if he were willing to perform a deed...

DAMNED



Gray faces watched impassively

by CLEE GARSON

YOUNG Devlin left the theater that evening with an immeasurable sense of happiness and well-being. The play had been superbly done, more than brilliantly acted, and contagiously exciting. Vicariously, young Devlin's own emotions had been keyed singingly to the buoyant, glad-to-be-alive zest that had been the theme of the performance.

Devlin's stride was brisk, his eyes sparkling, his smile still lingering, therefore, as he left the theater and started across the Loop through the brisk, tangy delightfulness of an unusually fine autumn evening.

Since it was scarcely after eleven, and since his apartment was not far from the Loop, Devlin decided to take full

advantage of this excellent evening by walking the distance to the near North Side address.

With that in mind, Devlin filled his lungs with the crisp, clean air, squared his shoulders, and began a rapid, loose, carefree stride which brought him to Michigan Boulevard, where he turned north.

Then his pace slowed a little, and he gave himself time to drink in the wonders of the majestic city skyline, the surging, happy throngs of people passing, and the very wordless joy of being so alive, so young, so gloriously happy.

With each block he walked, Devlin was even less conscious of the time that passed and the distance he was covering—even more enthralled by the tingling,

exciting wonder at the meanest, most mundane things around him.

Oak Street was behind him, and to his right, beyond the Outer Drive, the long white beaches of Lake Michigan were flecked with the spray of the breeze-sent whitecaps crashing endlessly in upon them.

Devlin filled his lungs more deeply, smiled more broadly to himself. His stride quickened to the freshening sting of the lake winds, and he buttoned his topcoat loosely.

To his left were row on row of brown-stoned, lofty dwellings, once the residences of Chicago's fashionably great, now clubs, consulates, humble boarding houses, or renovated apartment dwellings.

But the lawns to either side of Devlin bore great trees, the leaves of which were multicolored in gorgeous hues of brown and rust. And from the darkened side streets drifted wispy tendrils of smoke, caught from the fires made of fallen leaves.

"The smell of burning leaves in Autumn!" Devlin murmured half aloud. "There's no perfume to match it."

He realized now that he was but a few blocks from his own apartment, and knifed by a sharp regret at this, he determined to walk on a few blocks past it. This was a night not to be wasted.

"This is too fine to mi—" Devlin began.

But he never finished the sentence.

He'd been crossing one of those quiet side street intersections just as he spoke. And somehow he hadn't noticed the automobile roaring down on him until its headlights filled his eyes as he turned at some inner prompting of disaster.

Devlin knew only the glare of those lights, and a half-dimmed flash of a grinning, malicious face behind the wheel of the car.

Then it struck him—he couldn't have

avoided it—and hurled him fully ten feet through the air.

Blackness closed over Devlin, then. The blackness of unconsciousness . . .

SOMEONE shook Devlin's shoulder gently. Someone's voice was saying things to him. Things blurred by the ache in Devlin's head. He opened his eyes, and looked up into the face of a stranger.

"Easy now, fellow," this stranger warned. "You had a nasty crack from that machine. Don't move until you're certain that you're all in one piece."

Devlin got his elbows beneath him, and pushed unsteadily to one knee. He looked foggily around. He had been lying beside the curb of the same intersection which he'd started to cross at the instant the car struck him. Lying, where he'd been hurled, in the gutter.

Unconsciously, Devlin made a gesture to brush his clothing.

"Here, I'll help you rise," said the stranger.

He put his hand under Devlin's arm to steady him, and the young man rose groggily to his feet.

Now Devlin was able to view his benefactor clearly for the first time. The stranger was of medium height, about Devlin's own size, but some fifteen or twenty years older. The stranger wore a tweed of oxford gray, a soft slouch hat pulled over one eye. He had a long, rather horsy face. His complexion was slightly pallid.

"Thanks," Devlin mumbled. "Thanks a lot, old man. Was it a bit and run driver?"

The stranger nodded.

"I just got to the scene as the car was moving away," he said. "Gave you a nasty jar. Couldn't get its number."

Cautiously, Devlin was testing his arms and limbs. He seemed sound enough. A trifle bruised, perhaps. But

his headache had apparently vanished.

He was able to smile wanly now.

"A narrow squeak," he said. "That damned skunk might have killed me."

"He might have, at that," the stranger agreed. "But, here, you still look plenty gray and definitely shaken. Could I offer you a drink?"

"An excellent idea," Devlin declared.

"However, I hope you'll let me repay a little of your kindness by doing the buying."

"My club is right around the corner," said the stranger. "I would feel honored if you'd let me carry out my self-styled Samaritan role."

"But—" Devlin protested.

The stranger smiled. "Please," he said.

"Well," Devlin said reluctantly.

"Thank you," said the stranger. He took Devlin's arm companionably and helped him up to the sidewalk.

"Just around the corner," said the stranger. . . .

SCARCELY two minutes later, Devlin stood with the stranger on the big stone porch of what was once a pretentious old graystone mansion. His benefactor had pressed twice on the bell beside the ancient thick oaked door.

"My name is Devlin, sir."

"And mine is Benson," declared the stranger gravely.

The door opened at that instant. Opened to reveal a tall, old, gray-faced man in the uniform of a butler. He looked from Devlin to Benson, and, to the former, said:

"Come in, sir."

Benson stepped back, and Devlin walked ahead of him into a small, marbled hallway. A hallway which smelled old, almost musty, and was lighted only by a solitary ship's lantern hanging from an elaborate brass chain in the

center of the ceiling.

"You'll pardon my presumption, Benson," Devlin said, turning to his companion once they were in the hallway. "But exactly what is the name of this club? I don't recall ever having heard of any club being in this vicinity before."

"Very few people have," Benson smiled. He took off his hat and handed it to the gray-faced old butler. Devlin saw his benefactor was bald. "Very few people have," Benson repeated. "It's called the Association of Gentlemen of the Pale."

Devlin was slightly astonished.

"A rather odd name, isn't it?" he asked.

Benson stared at him unsmilingly, and Devlin suddenly wondered if he had offended his benefactor.

"It isn't at all, really," Benson said, smiling suddenly. "If one understands the complete purpose of the organization."

The butler stepped around them, now, and opened another door directly ahead.

Again Benson stood back, gesturing with a sweep of his hand to indicate that Devlin should precede him. And again Devlin was first through the door.

The room into which he now stepped was much larger than the cold, somewhat eerie, marble hallway. It was about thirty by fifty feet in measure, high-ceilinged, heavily beamed by thick, black timber.

In one corner of this room was a bar some twenty feet long. Behind the bar stood an elderly man in a gray shirt and gray apron who seemed almost a counterpart to the gray-faced butler.

The room was dimly lighted, like the hall. Its illumination, also like that of the hall, consisted of lanterns, ship style, hanging from two elaborate brass chains running from the ceiling.

In the gloom of the room, Devlin found it difficult at first glance to ascertain if any others were present. There were tables, many of them, scattered around conveniently. But as far as Devlin could see, all were unoccupied, and the barroom—for it must have been that—was utterly deserted save for the barkeep.

"We might as well have that drink I promised you," Benson said briefly, causing Devlin to wonder at the subtle changing in his benefactor's manner.

TOGETHER they crossed to the bar, their footsteps ringing on the polished flooring.

"Not very crowded tonight, eh?" Devlin offered.

Benson looked at him with raised eyebrows. He smiled in amusement, as if Devlin's remark had been particularly humorous.

"There's hardly what you'd call a crowd here at any time," Benson answered.

"But naturally," Devlin blushed apology. "It seems to be a club of rather small and exclusive membership."

Benson nodded. "Exclusive, all right. I'll say that much for it."

"If you don't mind my asking," Devlin said, "what's the total membership in this organization?"

Benson shrugged carelessly.

"I really haven't any accurate idea, old man," he said.

They were at the bar now, and the gray-faced, white-haired barkeep moved over unsmilingly to greet them.

"Good evening, gentlemen. What will it be?"

Benson looked at Devlin.

"Scotch," said the latter. "Plain water."

Benson smiled one of his curious smiles, and said: "You might serve

the same for me, Grensa."

As the barkeep moved away to get the drinks, Benson remarked:

"There are a number of members whom I know would be only too anxious to meet you, Devlin."

Startled, Devlin blinked. "Why, what do you mean?"

"I mean, merely, that after we have another drink, we might as well go upstairs for a bit, while I introduce you to some gentlemen who have been patiently awaiting your arrival," Benson said casually.

"Awaiting my arrival?" Devlin gasped. "Why, you're joking. No one could foresee that I'd be here and—"

Devlin stopped his sentence abruptly, staring wide-eyed at Benson.

"I don't mean to say that they expected you, exactly," Benson smiled. "But they are expecting someone. And you happen to be that person."

"I—I don't understand—" Devlin faltered.

"You will soon enough, Mr. Devlin," Benson declared. He smiled again, indicating the glasses and bottle which the solemn-faced old barkeep was placing before them. "But for the present, let us have that drink, eh?"

Devlin watched Benson pour the soda atop the ice and whisky in his glass, then repeat the process for Devlin's drink. This completed, Benson took his own glass, turned to Devlin.

"To your best luck, sir," he said.

Automatically, Benson took his glass from the bar, half-raising it in a toast-ing gesture.

"And to your kindness," Devlin murmured bewilderedly.

As Devlin raised his glass to his lips, he caught the eye of the strange old barkeep, and for the first time was aware of amusement in the old man's watery gray eyes.

Hurriedly, Devlin drained the con-

tents of his glass and set it back upon the bar. Turning to his host, he saw that Benson had gulped his own drink in surprisingly short order, and had been staring at Devlin with that curious half-smile again.

"Will you have another?" Benson asked.

Devlin shook his head. "Thanks, but no. I—I think that perhaps I had better be getting along. Won't you come, too, and join me in a drink at some neighboring bar?" He flushed again, under Benson's strangely intent scrutiny. "I really appreciate what you've done, sir. But I feel, ah, rather guilty imposing on your hospitality any more. If you'd permit me to repay you in some small—"

Benson cut him off.

"But the gentlemen upstairs, Devlin. Surely, you haven't any intention of disappointing them?"

DEVLIN felt uncomfortably backed against a wall. He didn't know what to say, what to think of this stranger who called himself Benson. He was also extremely bewildered by these surroundings which Benson called his club.

"I, ah, thought you were merely joking about that," Devlin said uneasily.

Benson shook his head. "Not at all. The gentlemen upstairs are expecting my guest and me. It so happens that you are my guest. Surely you'll stay long enough to meet them."

"But who, who are these gentlemen?" Devlin demanded.

"The Committee," Benson said simply.

"The Committee?" Devlin echoed hollowly. "I—I'm sorry, but I still don't understand."

"Why, on my word, Devlin," Benson exclaimed in sudden sardonic amusement. "You appear to be frightened!"

Devlin flushed hotly. "Not at all," he said. "It's just that, that—dammit, Benson," he suddenly exploded, "you have to admit that this is all singularly strange. You were kind to me, yes. But I don't know you, and I've never been in this—this club before. In fact, I've never heard of it before now. And now you say that you wish to introduce me to a—a committee of members whom I am certain I've never met before. Surely you recognize that the situation is distinctly unusual, to say the least!"

Benson shrugged. "Perhaps," he admitted. "But I can promise you that your curiosity will disappear when you meet our committee. It will all become very clear to you, then."

Benson's smile returned, mocking.

Devlin set his jaw in sudden decision.

"Very well, Benson," he said evenly. "I'll meet your committee. But I'm doing so principally to satisfy my own curiosity; understand?"

"Excellent," Benson smiled. "Come along, then, if you please." He started away from the bar toward a door at the other corner of the room. Devlin quickened his step until he walked beside Benson. Neither said a word. Benson still smiled.

At the door, Devlin's strange host paused, rapped twice on the dark oak paneling, and turned to Devlin.

"They are all extremely anxious to meet you," Benson said.

Devlin had the sudden impression that his host's voice had taken on a purring quality.

There was no sound from the other side of the door. No sound until it suddenly opened inward to admit them. And then Devlin's hoarse, involuntary gasp came forth.

The room into which they looked was rather small, possibly half the size of the barroom. And it was even more

weirdly illuminated than the barroom, in that its single focus of light was centered directly in the middle of the room, and came from a single, green-shaded lamp suspended by what must have been a long cord from the ceiling. The lamp hung perhaps three feet above a round old-fashioned gaming table covered by smooth green felt. And its round beam was only large enough to include the table.

The rest of the room was hidden in thick, semi-darkness. Darkness just heavy enough to make indistinguishable the outlines of the people, at least a dozen of them, who stood in a semi-circle around the table.

And then Devlin was conscious of his own startled outcry. He turned swiftly to Benson, to see that the other was grinning sardonically at him.

Devlin flushed deeply, opening his mouth to speak.

AND then a voice spoke from the darkness. A voice which seemed to come from the middle of the semi-circle around the lighted table. A low, masculine, ingratiating voice.

"We have been waiting," the voice declared.

"I have brought you a Mr. Devlin, gentlemen," Benson announced.

Devlin had a sudden mad sensation of terror. Terror caused by an inarticulate premonition of danger. But something held him there. Something kept him from the wild flight to which his mind was urging him.

"Let Mr. Devlin enter," said the voice from the darkness beyond the green felt table.

And suddenly Devlin realized that he was stepping forward, and that Benson remained where he was, while the door closed as noiselessly as it had opened.

Devlin stood alone in the room.

Alone, that is, but for the indistinguishable shadows in the gloom around the green felt table. Benson was no longer beside him. Benson had remained in the barroom.

There was a sudden rustling from those shadows. A sound like the shifting of dried leaves in a night breeze. And Devlin felt, rather than heard, a murmur, a giggling murmur, from those stirring shadows.

"What is this?" Devlin cried out suddenly, scarcely conscious that his vocal muscles had broken their swift bonds of fear. "Who are you? What is this all about?"

Now Devlin heard the dry, rustling giggle from the shadows clustering around that table.

"You are young," said the same voice that had spoken first from the darkness. "It is always so with those as young as you. They never realize it has happened."

"Damn you!" Devlin choked. "What is this? Who are you? Turn on some lights and be seen!"

"It might be better if you didn't see us," said the voice. "Even under the circumstances. Don't you really know where you are? Didn't the other tell you?"

Devlin felt suddenly, inexplicably chilled. He opened his mouth to answer this, but no words came.

"Obviously not," the voice continued. "Then I must tell you now. You were brought here from an accident, were you not? An accident in which you were either killed or miraculously saved. That is yet to be decided."

Devlin found voice again. "You are mad!" he choked. "What sort of fool's gibberish is this? A car struck me. I was not badly injured. That person outside this room, Benson, helped me up and brought me here on

the pretense of a drink. What is this all about?"

There was a murmur from the shadowy figures around the table. The same dry, rustling giggle.

"You are in the Pale," the voice from the darkness said. "You are directly between life and death. You are caught between the shades of Death and the realities of Life. And you are here to be offered an opportunity to cheat Death. You are here to receive your chance to walk again in the world of the living."

For an instant Devlin was stunned. Then anger flooded him.

"You are mad!" he shouted. "This is all sheer babbling lunacy. If you think that—"

The voice from the darkness cut in.

"If you do not believe those words, why do you not leave here?"

"I will!" Devlin exploded. "You're damned right I will. I'll get out of this madhouse right now!"

"Please do," said the voice mockingly.

SWEAT stood out on Devlin's brow.

His body was tensed, straining. His will, his mind, his strength all screamed for him to turn and leave the room. But he was helpless. Powerless. He couldn't move a muscle.

A minute passed, while the dry, rustling giggling again swept the shadows in the darkness.

The cry that burst from Devlin's lips was choked, sick, thick with terror.

"Perhaps you will now believe me, Devlin," said the voice at last. "You are neither dead nor alive. You are here in the Pale, where there is neither life nor death. Do you believe that?"

For an instant Devlin's lips worked before sound came. And then one word, torn shudderingly from his very fiber, choked forth.

"Yes!"

There was again a dry, rustling murmur from the figures in the shadows. A wordless sigh that was like the soft scraping of a bough against the earth.

"That is better," said the voice from the darkness. "Now I will repeat what I have already told you. You are here because you are going to be offered a chance to frustrate death. You are here because we are kind enough to offer you an opportunity to regain your life, to return to it exactly as if you had never been struck by that automobile. Do you want that chance?"

Devlin's voice, hoarse, despairing, gave answer.

"Yes! Oh, God, yes!"

Again that rustling inhuman sigh from the shadows behind the table. A sigh of pleasurable satisfaction.

"You are certain?" said the voice from the darkness.

"Yes." Devlin's answer was a choked whisper of supplication.

"Then approach this table," said the voice from the shadows.

Devlin's steps carried him robot-like toward the green circle of light splashing down on the felt surface of the table. He halted less than two feet from it.

"We ask only one thing for this chance we give you," said the voice. "We ask only that you bring back to us a life in exchange for the life we give you."

Devlin's eyes had been fixed hypnotically on the green felt circle of light. Now, by calling on every vestige of his will, he tore them from the table and stared wildly into the darkness across it.

"What do you mean?" he whispered hoarsely.

"A life," said the voice. "The life of another, in exchange for your own."

That is all."

"But I couldn't—" Devlin began.

"You are to take that life for us," said the voice. "And it is yours to choose whose it shall be. We are not particular."

"I?" The word came from Devlin's lips in a sob.

"You," said the voice. "Look back to the table, Devlin."

Devlin found his eyes returning to the illuminated circle of the green felt table top despite the resistance of his mind. And then he gasped in hideous repulsion.

An automatic pistol, cold, ominous, glittering, lay in the exact center of the table!

The rustling, half-human, giggling sigh swept the shadows in the darkness once more, and chill terror froze the very blood in Devlin's heart.

"No!" Devlin gasped. "No. Good God, I won't!"

"If you don't, you cross the Pale to death," said the voice from the shadows. "Remember that, Devlin, before you choose."

DEVLIN stared in horror at the blunt, cold glitter of the weapon. A shudder shook his body; his lips worked, and the sweat that trickled down his back was as ice.

"You are young, Devlin. Much lies ahead for you. There are others, countless others, whose lives are worthless, spent, cheap," said the voice. "Consider that. We do not demand any life in particular. It is for you to choose the life you'll give us in exchange. Don't you care to live, Devlin?"

Devlin ran his tongue over lips that were suddenly thick and dry. Again his body shook shudderingly, as if from fever.

"Yes," he whispered faintly. "Yes,

I want to live."

"Then take the gun from the table, Devlin," said the voice. "Take the gun from the table, slip it into your pocket and go out into the streets. You will find there a life to exchange for your own."

Devlin's hands twitched spasmodically. His lips worked again, and the glitter of the gun in the center of the green felt table was dazzlingly blinding.

"Take the gun, Devlin," the voice suggested. "Take the gun and go out into the streets. We will give you half an hour in which to give us a life in exchange for your own. Otherwise you die, Devlin."

Suddenly, lurching, Devlin stepped forward and grabbed the gun from the table. He staggered back, the weapon cold and heavy in his hand, his eyes fixed wildly on it.

The hideously chilling, rustling sigh swept the numberless shadows around the table once more—insane, unclean, giggling. Devlin raised his tortured eyes from the gun in his hand.

"Half an hour?" he croaked.

"That is the time limit, Devlin," said the voice. "Not a second longer. One life, for your own life. Any life it pleases you to take. It is now almost midnight, Devlin. The one who waits just outside the door, the one who brought you here, will accompany you."

Devlin slipped the gun into the pocket of his topcoat, his hand still closed tightly around it. He backed away from the table.

"Good hunting in your half hour, Devlin," said the voice tauntingly. "And do not forget. If you find no life to exchange, your own is forfeit."

Devlin turned suddenly and stumbled toward the door. Before his hand could close over the knob, it opened

for him. He stumbled out of the room, as the door closed behind him, cutting off another unclean rustle of a giggling sigh.

Benson waited for him, smiling.

"You took the chance," he said quietly. "You are wise. Life is precious, Devlin. Come, we'd better get started." He glanced at his watch. "It is now midnight, and we have half an hour for you to find your victim."

Devlin looked at Benson wordlessly through eyes mad with torment. . . .

FOR five minutes they had walked westward from the boulevard. Five minutes in which neither the tortured Devlin nor his companion had spoken a word. Five minutes of tension and torment made all the greater by the very wind that brushed Devlin's cheek.

And then at last they stood at an intersection which cut across one of the more tawdry and appallingly sordid sections of North Clark Street.

A streetcar rattled by, and on the corner across from them an ancient and half-blind electric sign proclaimed that the establishment in the filthy quarters beneath it was the "Joy Ni C b." Up and down North Clark, to right and left, similar hovels, with and without signs stood cringing beneath the all too bright glare of the street lamps.

Here every eighth sign was the age-old symbol of a pawnshop, and every third entrance was the squalid doorstep of a ten and twenty cent "Gent's Hotel."

The sidewalks were peopled by the jetsam of the human race, who moved sluggishly along in a ceaseless shuffle to nowhere or stood stolidly against the sides of cars which banked the filthy curbs. Merry-makers, obviously not too particular about the places where they purchased their release from reality, moved in and out of the endless chain

of sordid taverns, pausing only to quarrel drunkenly, at times, on the corners.

Benson spoke to Devlin for the first time since they had started out.

"You picked a nice hunting ground," he said grinningly. "One might well call this bargain street, for the exchange you're seeking."

Devlin's eyes stared fixedly ahead, and he didn't answer. He seemed, without moving his head, to be sweeping the street with an almost dully determined scrutiny.

And then Benson, pointing directly across the street, spoke again.

"There you are," he said. "You needn't look further. Standing with her back to us over there is a harlot. See her? She's busily looking into the window, using its reflection to canvass the street for customers or police."

Devlin turned his glance in the direction Benson pointed.

He saw the woman after an instant. As Benson had said, her back was turned to the street, and she seemed intent on the contents of a darkened store window.

Even from where they stood, Devlin could see the weary, beaten clump to the creature's thin shoulders. He could see, too, the badly worn heels of her cheap shoes, the ladder-like runs in her silk stockings.

She wore the sleaziest, thinnest of coats, and her long, straggling blonde hair hung to her shoulders as its bleached dullness shone in the stark illumination of the street lights.

Devlin's right hand was in his topcoat pocket, closed tightly around the automatic.

The woman suddenly coughed hacklingly, her shoulders shaking from the effort.

"Go ahead, you fool!" Benson snapped.

Slowly, Devlin moved across the

street. Then he stood on the corner, less than ten yards from the girl. The gun in his pocket was now moist from the dampness of his hand around it.

THE girl still stood peering into the window, and her cough had now subsided. Devlin stood motionless, staring at her.

"I'm young," he told himself. "I've a life ahead. That poor devil has a life that's shattered. It would be mercy, sheer mercy."

Very slowly, he moved over toward the window where the girl still stood. He tried to catch a glimpse of her face in the dark mirror of the lightless window.

Then Devlin stood directly beside her, his hand tight on the gun in his topcoat pocket. He had his words rehearsed. *Lcd's walk around that corner, up the side street. Don't want the cops to butt in.*

The girl half turned, looking from the darkened window up into Devlin's face. Her smile was red, tarnished, mechanical.

"Hello, handsome," she murmured.

"Did you see me in the window?" Devlin asked.

The girl's eyes showed genuine surprise.

"Window? Hell, no, handsome. I was just looking in, why?"

Devlin turned automatically to glance briefly into the darkened store window. For the first time he realized that it was the window of a flower shop.

The girl caught his glance.

"Pretty, ain't they?" she asked.

Devlin was momentarily taken aback.

"What?"

"Them orchids up in front," she said.

"I look at 'em at least a dozen times every night when I'm walking my beat along here."

And then Devlin saw the orchids in their slim glass stem-vases. They were white, delicately formed, beautiful.

Devlin found the words coming automatically to his lips.

"You look at them every night?" he asked.

"Sure," the girl said. "Sometimes I think I'd work all night for nothing for one of them things." She laughed harshly, unmusically. "Hell, handsome. A girl can dream, can't she?"

Suddenly the creature started to cough again. She put her dirty scrap of a handkerchief to her red mouth in a futile attempt to stem the spasm.

For fully a minute Devlin stared at her, the expression in his eyes one of incredulous wonder.

The girl had choked off her coughing spasm. And now she gave Devlin her red, tarnished smile again.

"Whatcha say, handsome—" she began.

Devlin's hand had slipped from the gun in his pocket.

He nodded briefly, scarcely conscious that he was doing so, and started to turn away.

"Hey—" the girl began whiningly.

"Sometime, perhaps, you'll have one of them," Devlin said. "An extraordinary lovely one, white, with beautiful purple petals."

He turned and started back across the street. Benson, his face a mask of amused scorn, waited for him on the other corner.

"Are you crazy, Devlin?" he demanded.

Devlin looked unseeingly at Benson. "She still dreams," he said. He turned and started southward up the street. Benson caught up with him in a few strides.

"Don't be a fool, Devlin!" Benson smirked. "Don't forget for a minute the forfeit you'll pay if you lose your

nerve too often."

Devlin strode on, not turning his head.

"There are only twenty minutes remaining, Devlin," Benson said. His voice was mocking, taunting.

Still Devlin didn't reply. They walked a block in silence, then, and finally Devlin's pace slowed until at last he paused on another street corner.

SLOWLY, Devlin looked around the intersection. They stood before the windows of a cheap all-night restaurant. Inside, beyond a greasy steam counter where a pasty-faced, puff-eyed night counter man leaned boredly back against an ancient cash register and picked his teeth, were rows of one-armed eating chairs.

With the exception of two heavily painted chorines catching a snack between floor shows at a frowzy neighboring dive, and a small, seedily dressed little man in his late sixties, there were no customers.

Devlin's gaze was fixed intently on the seedy little man, however. Fixed on the small stooped shoulders, the clean but frayed white shirt, the weary, pinched features.

The pathetic little fellow was reading a newspaper and finishing a cup of coffee. A small plate at his elbow, unstained but empty, was ample evidence that his repast had consisted also of no more than roll or doughnut.

Benson was now aware of Devlin's intent scrutiny, and he joined him in staring at the little fellow inside.

"Not a bum," Benson said sardonically. "But well on the way. Still makes a futile effort to keep up what little face there's left to him. Look at that shirt, white as sugar, yet falling apart. And that suit's as shiny as a polished shoe."

Devlin didn't answer Benson, but spoke half to himself.

"Another year and he'll slip a little lower on the ladder of survival. Looks as though he picks up what pennies he now has from odd jobs. His hands are red, swollen. Washing dishes already, no doubt, or scrubbing floors in cheap hotels. Nothing left but his self-respect, and that's probably taking more and more of a frightful beating."

The little man suddenly folded the newspaper, placed it under his arm. He wiped his lips with a paper napkin, took off his spectacles carefully and placed them in a case which he put into the frayed inner pocket of his suitcoat. He had no bat.

"Only clothes he owns are on his back, such as they are," Benson murmured.

The little man walked up to the steam counter and pulled out a small, ragged change purse. From it, he carefully took a nickel. Then he counted out five pennies which he added to the sum. He placed the change on the steam counter and turned away toward the door.

"You'll be doing him a favor," Benson whispered in a softly urging tone.

Devlin saw that the newspaper under the little man's arm had been folded to the employment-wanted columns. And then the pathetic little chap was pushing through the revolving doors.

Devlin's movement was one of sudden desperate resolve. He stepped swiftly over to the entrance out of which the little fellow was emerging at this moment. Devlin's hand was once again tight on the gun in the pocket of his topcoat.

The frayed little chap and Devlin almost collided.

It was the little fellow's quick sidestep which averted the near collision.

And as he stepped aside, he looked up into Devlin's face and smiled amiably.

"Almost bead on, what?" the little chap said.

BUT Devlin didn't answer. He was staring at the small, worn, utterly ridiculous hutton in the badly frayed lapel of the other's seedy suit. A two colored, pathetically jaunty little button of the type sold by cheap novelty stores.

"KEEP ON SMILING!" it read.

The little man seemed unperturbed by Devlin's lack of reply. Then he was suddenly aware of the scrutiny to which the button was being subjected. He widened his grin, and it seemed as incongruous on his pinched, weary little face as did the hutton on the ragged lapel.

"A dandy slogan, eh?" he asked.

Devlin spoke mechanically, like a man in a trance.

"Yes," he answered. "It certainly is."

He turned away, almost humping into Benson. The little fellow, moving on down the street in the opposite direction, was whistling. The cheery notes, fading away, were suddenly drowned by the din of a passing street-car.

"You fool," Benson said disgustedly. "You're as great a fool as he."

Devlin didn't meet Benson's eyes.

"Let's move on," he said tightly.

They crossed the street and started southward again. In the middle of the block, Benson looked at his watch.

"You have only ten more minutes, Devlin. You'd better make up your mind. You're muffed two chances already."

"I couldn't see his face," Devlin muttered in bitter torment, "until he smiled."

"If you'd forget their faces and re-

member your own hide you'd be wiser," Benson said scornfully.

Devlin said nothing, and they went on in silence for another block.

"Time is passing quickly, Devlin," Benson said.

Devlin stopped, turning on his companion with eyes that welled tortured rage.

"Damm you!" he snarled. "Don't you think I know it?"

"Then get it over with, you fool," Benson snapped contemptuously. Suddenly he was gazing over Devlin's shoulder, and his eyes lighted.

"Here comes one that should be easy even for you," Benson said quickly. "Turn around and have a look."

Devlin wheeled.

Down the street, weaving most unsteadily in their direction, came a filthy, bearded, tattered spectre of a human being. Even from a distance of twenty yards or more it was obvious what the creature represented.

A derelict. An utterly filthy piece of floating flotsam. A rum-soaked, louse-ridden shell of a man. Had Devlin searched for a more disgusting representative of the sort of human driftwood clogging that street, it would have been impossible to find a more sickening specimen.

"Now!" Benson exulted. "Don't be a fool about this one. Just walk up to him quickly. Shove the gun against his heart and let him have it!"

White-faced, Devlin hesitated. His expression was a pattern of twisted anguish.

"Don't tell me you can't even give it to this one?" Benson sneered.

THE derelict was weaving drunkenly nearer now. Devlin watched his unsteady approach in hypnotic fascination. His hand on the gun in his pocket opened and closed convulsively. He

wet his lips, swallowing hard. He could see the bum's gutter-grimed face now, the hopeless, red-rimmed, staring eyes. The drooling, grinning mouth and yellowed teeth. The filthy, matted stuhhle of beard.

"You fool!" Benson snarled.

And something broke in Devlin, then. His hand went tight around the gun in his pocket, as if for emotional control, and he wheeled on his companion.

"Damn you!" he blazed. "Damn you and the rest of them! I can't do it, understand? I won't do it? I don't care what they're like, or how badly beaten. If they're alive they're fighting, at least for survival!"

"You sucker!" Benson spat the words at him in mocking derision, and his lips twisted in a malevolent smirk. "You'll get no more than you deserve, then. The minutes are ticking off, sucker, and before many more are gone you'll be a corpse left broken and mangled in the gutter I picked you up from."

Devlin threw his hand across his eyes, and shuddered in terror.

"I can't do it!" he gritted. "I can't do it!"

"Only a sucker wouldn't." Benson mocked. "A weak stomached fool!"

Devlin took his hand from his face and stared at Benson. His eyes went wide in sudden astonishment.

Benson was grinning evilly, maliciously, tauntingly.

And Devlin knew that he had seen that grin briefly, hideously, before! Had seen that grin over the hood and between the almost blinding headlights of the automobile that had ruthlessly run him down!

Devlin spoke slowly, in an almost awed horror.

"You were the one, Benson. That's how you gave them a life in exchange for your own. *They offered the same*

chance to you, and you drove down the first human being you encountered, mercilessly, brutally. You were behind the wheel of the car that ran me down. You gave them my life for yours—just as I was supposed to give them a life now for mine!"

A mad, overpowering rage swept Devlin. He glared insanely at his white-faced companion.

"You lousy, cold-blooded, murdering swine!" Devlin spat.

The last two words were drowned in the blasting reports from the automatic which Devlin shoved hard against Benson's chest in a swift, vicious gesture.

And Benson, face still twisted in terror and pain, was falling forward, crumpling inward as he fell, blood pooling from the gaping rent five shots had torn in his chest.

That was all that Devlin saw, for a sudden, engulfing blackness swept overpoweringly down on him. . . .

THERE was a hand on Devlin's shoulder. He opened his eyes and stared up into the face of a worried policeman.

"That's better, lad," the policeman sighed. "Count yer bones to see if yer still in one piece. That madman driver almost run yer down. I seen it from the other corner. He only nicked yer shoulder, though, thank God. The spill it gave yer musta knocked yez out fer a minute or two."

Dazedly, Devlin sat up. He was at the intersection just off the lake front, not more than a few blocks from his apartment. Foggily, he remembered the terror of the headlights bearing down on him.

"Was it a— a hit-and-run driver, officer?" Devlin asked shakily.

The policeman nodded soberly.

"He hit yez and tried to run. But he
(Concluded on page 241)



The **FUGITIVE**

by
E. K. JARVIS

Larkin was highly regarded as a quiet, respectable citizen until Dr. Holmes received him as a patient. Then murder and abduction came to Edwardsville . . .



His head disappeared in a blaze of light.

I REMEMBER it as if it happened yesterday, the bright lights in the room, the quick, deft movements of my father's fingers, the worried frown that kept coming back to his forehead, and the way Mr. Larkin lay on the table without moving. It was the kitchen table he was lying on and across the room water was boiling furiously in a big pan on the kitchen stove. Jeanie Butler and I were on the back porch, peeping through the screen door. The darkness

hid us and father did not know we were there.

Using tongs and rubber gloves, father took a knife out of the pan of boiling water. It was a scalpel, one of the set that he carried in his medicine kit.

"This is going to hurt," he said.

"No, it won't hurt," Mr. Larkin whispered. "I can control *that*. Go ahead and do what needs to be done."

Father hesitated, a worried frown on his forehead, then went ahead. He

worked quickly, as though he was fighting time. Mr. Larkin did not make a sound.

"Oo—h!" Jeanie whimpered.

"Sissie!" I said.

"Don't you call me a sissie, Bill Holmes" she snapped. "Just because you're twelve years old doesn't mean you're any b-braver than I am."

She didn't sound very brave but she quit whimpering. She was only ten but she did not like to be called a sissie.

Inside the kitchen, my father had finished using the scalpel. He was working with a needle sewing up the edges of Mr. Larkin's wound. The frown on his face had grown deeper and he fairly snatched at the sutures, his fingers flying from task to task faster than I could follow them. What he was doing did not seem very difficult to me then, but I know now that he was performing alone and unaided in an ordinary kitchen an operation that would have taxed the facilities of the best hospital in the country.

Mr. Larkin, of course, should have gone to father's office, where there was an operating table. But in an emergency, patients frequently went to the doctor's home instead of his office, especially at night. Mr. Larkin had come here. Jeanie and I had been playing in the front room and father had been reading his paper when Mr. Larkin stumbled in through the front door, his left side nothing but a mass of blood. Father had taken one look at him and had shouted at Jeanie and me to go outside. Jeanie lived next door.

"D-do you think he is going to die?" Jeanie whispered. She was about to cry. She, and everyone else in town, liked Mr. Larkin. He had only lived here a couple of years but during that time he had made himself a friend of everybody.

Father had finished with the sutures

and was busy putting bandages in place. Mr. Larkin didn't move. Father felt his pulse and stood for a long time in silence.

"Finished?" Mr. Larkin whispered.

"All done."

"How—how did it come out?"

"You've got a chance," father said. "That's all it is—a chance. I'm going to put you to bed here. I want you to relax completely. You mustn't talk, you mustn't think. Just relax and we'll take care of you."

EDWARDSVILLE, our home town, only has two thousand people, not enough to support a hospital. People who get sick are nursed at home. Since there was no hospital and since Mr. Larkin did not have any folks to help take care of him, father was going to keep him at our house.

"Thanks, Dr. Holmes," Mr. Larkin whispered. "You can be certain I will be grateful."

"You relax," father said gruffly. "I'm going next door and get a neighbor to help me move you to bed."

Father came to the back door, and caught Jeanie and me watching. He didn't bawl us out. Instead he sent Jeanie home after her father. Mr. Butler came and he and my father moved Mr. Larkin upstairs to bed. Then the two men came downstairs.

"What happened?" Mr. Butler asked.

"Ed, I don't know," father answered.

"Thanks for helping me out."

"Glad to do it, Doc," Mr. Butler said. Then, taking Jeanie with him, he went home. Father looked at me.

"Isn't it about your bedtime, Bill?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," I said. Then I grew bold. "What—what happened to Mr. Larkin, sir?"

I didn't think he would answer me.

I expected him to smile and say that a doctor could not reveal, even to his own family, the nature of a patient's illness, because, in a small town like ours, it might cause gossip. But he did answer me, which shows how upset he was.

"I don't know, Bill," he said. "I think he was shot—"

"Shot!" I gasped.

He looked quickly at me. "Don't you mention that to a soul!" he said.

"I won't, sir. But—who shot him?"

"It isn't so much *who* shot him as *what* shot him!" he answered. Before he had a chance to tell me what he meant, the doorbell rang. He went to open the door.

"Hello, Doc," a hearty voice said from the porch outside. "Sorry to disturb you but I heard Mr. Larkin had come here—"

"Just a second," father said. He looked at me. "It's time to go to bed, Bill." Without waiting for me to answer, he went outside, carefully closing the door behind him.

I knew he didn't want me to hear what was being said. That was why he went outside instead of asking the caller in. But there was only one man in town with a voice like that and I had already heard too much not to want to know more.

The man outside was the sheriff.

I went out the back door and around to the side of the house.

"Is Larkin here?" I heard the sheriff say.

"Yes."

"I want to see him."

There was a pause and then my father said. "Sorry, sheriff, but you can't see him tonight. He is badly hurt. The fact that he is still alive is little short of a miracle. Frankly, I was hoping you could tell me what happened to him."

"He was shot!" the sheriff said.

"The devil he was! Who did it?"

"We've got the fellow who did it. At least," the sheriff hesitated, "we've got what is left of him."

"What's left of him!" my father gasped.

"He hasn't any head left," the sheriff explained. "It was blown completely off."

"Blown off!" my father echoed. "Did Larkin—"

The sheriff nodded. "You can't blame Larkin. It was self defense. This fellow shot first, but his aim wasn't good and Larkin shot second. Larkin didn't miss—"

"Just a minute," my father interrupted. "Start this at the beginning. Who shot Larkin?"

"That's part of what I don't know," the sheriff answered slowly. "He was a stranger. Blew in town this afternoon and nosed around asking questions. Tonight, when Larkin was walking down to the square, the stranger was hiding in an alley. When Larkin came along, the stranger took a shot at him."

LISTENING beside the porch, I was trembling with excitement. A regular gun battle had been fought here in our town!

"What kind of a gun did the stranger use?" my father demanded, his voice tense with excitement.

"Why do you ask that?" the sheriff countered.

"Because I treated Larkin's wound. It—well, I've been a doctor for fifteen years and before tonight I never saw a wound like that."

"What was it like?"

"It—it's not like anything I ever saw. In the first place, it's as big as my fist. The bullet, or whatever it was that caused the wound, struck Larkin a glancing blow. Taking flesh, muscles, ribs and everything else with it, it

gouged a groove in Larkin's side—"

Usually, like most doctors, my father was very calm. He wasn't calm now.

"The devil you say!" the sheriff said.

"And that isn't all," father continued.

"The flesh of the wound was not mutilated and torn as it would have been if the damage had been caused by a bullet. The edges of the wound were smooth and the flesh was seared. Sheriff, I don't want this repeated, but in my opinion the hole in Larkin's side was *burned* there!"

Abruptly he was silent, as if he had said more than he should. The night was quiet. Next door Mr. Butler came out of their house, saw the car in front, glanced at my father and the sheriff on our front porch, then took one last puff at his cigar and went back inside. He was curious about what was happening over at our house but he couldn't come over and ask.

There was a rustle of movement on the lawn near me. I tensed. Somebody or something was coming. Then I saw who it was.

"You are supposed to be in bed!" I said severely.

"So are you, I bet," Jeanie whispered. Her father might not be able to come over and ask questions but she was restrained by no such scruples.

"How did you know I was here?"

"I was watching from my window. I saw you come out the back. Oh, Bill, what's happening?"

"You be quiet," I said. I should have sent her home, but if I had tried to send her home, she would have cried and both of us would have gotten caught.

"Have you found the gun that was used to shoot Larkin?" father asked.

"No," the sheriff answered. "The fact that the gun is missing is another reason why I want to talk to Larkin. I thought maybe he took the gun with him."

"I undressed him," father said. "If he had a gun on him, I didn't see it. I would have seen it if he had one."

"Not even his own gun?" the sheriff questioned. "The gun he used to kill the fellow who tried to kill him. Wasn't it on him, either?"

"No," my father said emphatically. "When he came here, he was unarmed."

"That's damned funny," the sheriff said.

"Perhaps he hid the guns before he got here," father suggested.

The sheriff nodded. "That's about what happened," he agreed. "I don't blame him either. If I had a gun that would burn a man's head off, I wouldn't want anybody finding it on me either. But by gravy, I sure as hell would like to see one of those guns!"

His voice died to a rumble as if he was wondering what kind of a gun would burn a hole in a man. The sheriff was no stranger to guns, pistols, revolvers, shotguns, rifles, he had handled them all. Here he had run into a weapon outside the range of his experience and he was worried about it.

"Are you going to file charges against Larkin," father asked.

"N-o," the sheriff said slowly. "He shot in self-defense. But by gravy, he is going to have to answer some questions. Larkin has lived here for two years. He never does any work, he never gets any mail, and until tonight he never had a visitor. He always seems to have plenty of money but nobody knows where he gets it. He never talks about himself. By gravy, Doc, when he gets able to talk, he is going to have to tell me where he came from and what he is doing here."

THE sheriff's voice trailed into silence but I knew he had touched on a favorite subject for gossip around town. Ever since he came here, Mr.

Larkin had been a mystery.

"Um," said my father thoughtfully. "Do you think he is a criminal in hiding?"

"It scarcely seems possible," the sheriff answered. "He's too nice a guy to be a crook. Everybody likes him. But what happened tonight proves he's hiding out all right. Somebody is after him. Whoever is after him, caught up with him tonight."

The sheriff's voice was harsh and hard. Somehow he sounded scared, as if there were things about Mr. Larkin that he didn't like at all.

"As soon as he is strong enough to answer question, I'll let you know," my father said.

"Are you going to keep him here?" the sheriff asked.

"I have to. Too dangerous to move him."

"That's for you to decide," the sheriff said. "I guess I don't need to warn you that you may have taken a dangerous character under your roof."

"I know," father said thoughtfully. He was going to say more but just then a car came down the street and pulled into our drive. It was our car and I knew who was driving it. It was mother, returning from a meeting. I knew I had better be in bed by the time she got upstairs. Jeanie scooted for home and I went up the back stairs and to bed.

I was too excited to go to sleep. I kept wondering about Mr. Larkin.

Who was he? Where had he come from? What was he hiding from?

FOR days Mr. Larkin was near death.

I remember the many times my father left the sick room shaking his head. "He simply can't live," I heard him tell mother. "There is almost no pulse beat and he is scarcely breathing. He just lies there like a man in a trance. He

doesn't even wake up enough to be fed."

Then he did wake up. He asked for food and immediately began to get better. My father breathed a sigh of relief.

The next day his relief vanished. An infection developed in Mr. Larkin's wound.

Father was almost constantly at his bedside. He had already hired one nurse, now he hired a second one, so that someone was with Mr. Larkin every minute. Our home began to look like a hospital. I was strictly forbidden to make any noise or to do anything that might disturb the patient. The sheriff came to see him. "I doubt if he has a chance in a thousand to recover," my father said. "I've done everything known to medical science but the infection continues to develop." He went back to Mr. Larkin's room.

An hour or so later he hurriedly came out of the house and jumped into his car. Jeanie and I were watching outside and we saw him leave. He went to the drug store and returned with several small bottles, which he took to Mr. Larkin's room. I didn't see him again for several hours. When next he emerged from the sick room he walked like a man in a daze.

"I don't understand it," he told mother. "I don't begin to understand it."

"What do you mean?" she asked. "Is — is he dead?"

"No. And he's not going to die. The infection is whipped."

"You mean he is going to recover?"

"He certainly is." My father shook his head.

"What did you do?" mother asked.

"I? I didn't do anything. There wasn't anything I could do."

"But you said—"

"He did it!" my father said emphatically. "All I did was to serve as his

errand boy and run to the drug store for him. He told me what to get. He compounded the drugs, one, a powder, which he made me sprinkle directly on the wound, the second, a solution which he took internally. Within an hour the fever was going down. Within two hours, the infection was on the run. *I tell you that man knows more about medicine than I do!*"

There was a dazed, bewildered look on his face, as though he had just witnessed a miracle. "Larkin knows more about medicine than I do," he repeated again.

FROM that hour on, Mr. Larkin was out of danger.

When he was strong enough, the sheriff came to talk to him. Jeanie and I had been waiting for this moment, planning what we would do. We knew we couldn't be in the room but contrived to be playing quietly under the window. For a while the two men talked quietly and we could not hear what was being said, then we heard the sheriff's voice raised in anger.

"I demand to know who you are and what you are doing here?"

"Why do you ask?" Mr. Larkin replied.

"Because the protection of the people of this community is my duty," the sheriff answered.

"And am I a menace to the people of this community?" Mr. Larkin asked. There was doubt in his voice, as if this idea had never occurred to him.

"I can't say that you are," the sheriff grumbled. "On the other hand, I can't say you aren't. But when a stranger comes here and tries to shoot you, I have the right to know who you are."

Mr. Larkin was silent for a long time. When he answered, he seemed sad. "I guess I had better go away," he said.

"I'm not ordering you to leave," the sheriff said. "As long as you conduct yourself all right, you can stay here—providing you tell me where you came from."

"That," Mr. Larkin said, "I cannot do."

"Why not?" the sheriff demanded.

"I refuse to answer," Mr. Larkin said.

When the exasperated sheriff left, he took with him an ordinary drinking glass that he had asked the nurse to get from Mr. Larkin's room. He wrapped the glass carefully in a handkerchief.

I didn't need to ask to know why the sheriff had taken the glass that the sick man had used. It had Mr. Larkin's fingerprints on it.

The sheriff was going to find out who Mr. Larkin was.

Several days passed and the sheriff did not return. I assumed it took a long time to develop the prints and check them with the files. In the meantime Mr. Larkin had gone so far along the road to recovery that Jeanie and I were allowed to visit him. In fact, he asked that we be permitted to come to his room.

He was a swell guy! When I told him about the ham radio receiver I was building, he borrowed my mail order catalogue and sent to Chicago for the parts I needed, including an electric soldering iron and a complete set of tools. When he learned that Jeanie liked dolls, he bought her the biggest doll she had ever seen. How her eyes glistened when she opened the box and saw the present Mr. Larkin had got for her. She ran to thank him.

"I hope you like it," he said, smiling.

After that, Jeanie thought he was about the most wonderful man who ever was. "I think we ought to warn him, Bill," she said.

"About what?"

"About the fingerprints."

I knew if I didn't warn him, she would. Anyhow I liked him too, and I thought he ought to have a chance to get away. He frowned when I told him about the prints on the glass and at first I thought he was scared.

But he wasn't scared. He just didn't understand. "What are fingerprints, Bill?" he asked. "Why would the sheriff want mine?"

I thought he was teasing me. Everybody knows what fingerprints are! But he insisted he didn't know what they were.

"I see," he said thoughtfully, when I told him what they were. "A method of identification. Crude, but effective. Why did you tell me this, Bill?" he asked looking at me.

"So you would have a chance to get away," I answered promptly.

"Why should I want to get away?" he asked. "I like living here. I've known real peace here, the first place I ever had in my life—ah—Why would I want to leave?"

"Well," I blurted, "Somebody tried to kill you and the sheriff thinks you might be a crook hiding out and—"

"What is a crook?" he asked.

Again I thought he was teasing me. From little things my father had said I had thought Mr. Larkin was one of the smartest men who had ever lived but he didn't know about crooks.

"A crook—he's a guy who takes things that belong to other people, a gangster, a thief," I tried to explain. "Are—are you a crook, Mr. Larkin?"

If I had been older, I would not have dared to ask that question but I didn't know any better then.

MR. LARKIN took a long time to answer. "I see," he said slowly. "Well, once I took something that didn't belong to me, but only because

I was desperate. If that makes me a crook, then I am afraid I am one."

"What did you take?" I asked.

He wouldn't answer that. And he wouldn't tell me about the man who had tried to kill him. "No more questions now, Bill," he said. "I see my presence here is causing speculation and maybe will cause trouble. I had not intended to cause trouble. Will you always remember that, Bill: my intentions were good. All I wanted was a place where I could be at peace."

"Yes, sir," I said. He seemed so sad and unhappy that I felt sorry for him. As I left his room he called to me to ask my father to step up. "I want to pay him," he said.

Later that afternoon, when my father came home, I told him Mr. Larkin wanted to see him. He went up to see the patient and later, in the study, I heard him talking to mother.

"Larkin paid me a thousand dollars," he said. "And I think I know what he is."

"What?" mother quickly asked.

"A counterfeiter!" he answered. "I'm almost sure of it. One of the notes he gave me was a fifty dollar bill. Look at it, will you? See the date on it!"

I was passing the study when I overheard them. They stopped speaking when I entered the room and father put the money away in his desk.

I never heard him mention it again. Something happened that night and the money became only another mysterious link in a strangely broken chain.

That night Jeanie was kidnapped.

We were playing in the side yard when it happened. Her mother had already called to her to come home. "Goodnight, Bill," Jeanie said. "I'll see you tomorrow."

She started across the yard toward her house. There was a light burning

on the front porch and a street lamp directly in front. I could see her clearly as she ran across the yard.

Suddenly two men appeared beside her. To this day I do not know whether they had been lurking in the shadows and had suddenly sprung erect or whether they sprang out of nothingness. One second they weren't there. The next second they were.

They grabbed Jeanie. At the same time they dropped something white.

She screamed.

The two men vanished.

They took her with them.

The echoes of her scream had not died down until her mother came running from their house.

"Jeanie! What is it, dear? What happened?"

Then Mrs. Butler saw me. "What happened, Bill? I thought I heard Jeanie scream. Where is she?"

I guess I was scared. I felt funny inside. Down in my stomach somebody seemed to be winding up a strong spring. I tried to talk but the words wouldn't come. Jeanie's mother saw how scared I was. This frightened her.

"They grabbed her," I gulped, my voice suddenly returning.

"Who grabbed her? What do you mean, Bill? What are you talking about?"

"Two men grabbed her. They ran off with her."

Mrs. Butler stared at me as if she thought I was crazy. Then she went into hysterics. "Jeanie!" she frantically screamed. "Jeanie, where are you? Answer me."

There was no answer.

By this time Mr. Butler had come outside. So had my mother. Father was out on a call. I tried to tell them what had happened. Since I didn't know what happened myself, I had a hard time telling them.

"But that's impossible!" Mr. Butler snapped. Mother looked scared, but she didn't say anything.

"Nobody would kidnap Jeanie," Mr. Butler said. "Control yourself, dear," he said to Jeanie's mother. "There is some rational explanation for this. Perhaps she is somewhere near—"

"Then why doesn't she answer?" Mrs. Butler wailed. "Jeanie! Where are you?"

"The men dropped something on the grass," I said. I picked it up. It was a piece of paper with writing on it. Jeanie's father snatched it from my hands before I had a chance to read it.

"It's written in some foreign language," he said. "I can't read it."

By this time several neighbors had gathered. Mr. Butler passed the note around. No one could read it.

"Why would anyone kidnap Jeanie?" he whispered. "I'm not a rich man. I can't pay a ransom. And I don't have any enemies. It's impossible."

HE STILL didn't believe she had been kidnapped. Mother quietly went into the house and called the sheriff. He didn't waste any time getting on the scene.

"What happened?" he demanded.

"Jeanie is gone," Mr. Butler told him. "Bill Holmes said he saw two men grab her, but I don't believe she was kidnapped. I can't believe it."

"Did you ever see the two men before?" the sheriff asked me.

"No, sir. They were strangers."

"M-n-n," the sheriff said thoughtfully. He examined the note but he couldn't read it either.

"If it is a ransom note, it would surely be written in a language we could understand," Mr. Butler insisted. "There wouldn't be any point in leaving a note that no one could read."

"No, there wouldn't."

"May I see the note?" a new voice asked. It was Mr. Larkin who had spoken. He had come quietly downstairs and was standing on the porch leaning against one of the posts. No one had noticed him arrive.

Sudden silence fell when he spoke. People looked at him and looked at each other and didn't say anything. Worrying about Jeanie, they had forgotten about him. Now they were remembering there was something strange about him. The sheriff handed him the note.

He held it under the porch light and stared at it. Not a sign of emotion showed on his face.

"He is reading it!" someone whispered.

"If he can read that note, he knows something about the men who kidnapped Jeanie," a second voice whispered.

"Maybe he was in with the kidnapers!" a third person said. "Maybe he is one of them."

I knew everyone who was there. They were our neighbors, kind, friendly people, every one of them. They didn't look kind and friendly now. They looked mean, as if they were about to tear somebody to pieces. Mr. Larkin glanced up from the note. His face was a grayish white.

Mr. Butler stepped forward. "Can you read that note?" he asked. There was something in his voice that I had never heard before, a harsh, hard bitterness. The sheriff looked quickly at him. "Easy," the sheriff said.

Mr. Butler ignored the sheriff. "Can you read that note?" he demanded again.

Mr. Larkin didn't answer. He glanced at us as if he wanted to see what we were thinking. No one said a word.

"Answer me!" Jeanie's father said,

his voice harsher than ever.

Mr. Larkin sighed. There was pain on his face.

"No," he said.

No one stirred, no one moved, after he spoke.

"You're a liar!" Jeanie's father said. "I watched you. You were reading it. Damn you, what did it say? You better talk and talk quickly — Keep your hands off me!" The last was said to the sheriff who had put his hand on Mr. Butler's shoulder.

The sheriff quickly took his hand away. "I said to take it easy," he said sympathetically. "I know how you feel but don't go off half-cocked. Think, man! Larkin didn't have anything to do with kidnapping your daughter."

"I'm not saying he did," Mr. Butler answered. "I'm asking him to tell me what was in that note."

"I—it is better—" Mr. Larkin faltered. "You don't know what you're asking. There are some things—It is better for you not to know—" His eyes went from Mr. Butler to us. He seemed to be pleading with us to understand and not condemn him until we knew the facts.

"Damn you, Jeanie is gone!" Mr. Butler said. "Do you understand that? What was in that note?"

"I—I don't want to tell you—"

"Talk!" Mr. Butler said. There was something in his voice that made me shake all over.

"I am sorry," Mr. Larkin said, "to have brought you pain. I didn't want to tell you what was in the note because there is nothing you can do. Yes, Jeanie has been kidnapped. The ransom they demand for her safe return—I am that ransom—"

In the hot heavy silence that followed, not a word was spoken. I tried to understand what Mr. Larkin had

said. He was the ransom the two men demanded for the return of Jeanie. How could he be a ransom? Kidnappers always wanted money.

These kidnappers didn't want money. They wanted Mr. Larkin. Why did they want him?

He was probably the only person who could answer that question and he apparently did not choose to answer it.

I wondered what he was going to do. The men had Jeanie. Would he give himself up—for her?

He looked at Jeanie's father. "I am going upstairs," he said. "Let no one follow me. Your daughter will be returned. You may be certain of that—little Jeanie will be brought back to you—"

HE TURNED and walked into the house. His gait was unsteady and he stumbled through the door. I could hear his feet going up the stairs.

No one moved. No one uttered a sound. A heavy paralysis seemed to have settled over the whole group. Then someone leaped on the porch.

It was Mr. Butler. He jerked the screen door aside and leaped into the house. His feet thudded on the stairs.

"Wait, Butler!" the sheriff shouted.

He didn't stop. All he was thinking was that Jeanie was gone and Mr. Larkin knew something about it. The sheriff ran after him.

Lights flashed on in the rooms of the second floor. There was the sound of a furious search. Then there was silence, broken by a bewildered voice. "He's not here."

"He's got to be here!" the sheriff said. "We saw him come up the stairs. Maybe he's biding somewhere." The sheriff came to the window. "Come up here and help us search," he said.

We searched the whole house, from attic to basement. When we had fin-

ished, one astonishing fact was clear—Mr. Larkin was not there. All of us had seen him go into the house and had heard him climb the stairs. Thirty seconds later, when Mr. Butler followed him, he was gone. In the time that elapsed, he simply could not have escaped from the house.

He had escaped.

It was an awed, frightened group that assembled in our living room.

"You must find him," Jeanie's mother insisted. "You simply *must* find him!"

"There is a chance he slipped down the back stairs," the sheriff said. "If he is anywhere in this vicinity, we'll find him." He called his office, routed out his staff of deputies, ordered all roads blocked. Then he deputized at least fifty men to search the whole town.

An hour passed. The deputies who had blocked all roads reported by telephone that they had seen nothing of Larkin. Reports began to come in from the men who were searching the town. "No sign of Larkin. Nobody has seen him."

"He can't escape," the sheriff said. "It's not possible. This whole town is being combed. We'll find him."

Two hours passed.

Mr. Larkin had not been found.

A car screamed to a halt in front of our house.

"Who's that?" the sheriff shouted.

It was my father. He had heard about the kidnapping but apparently he had not got it straight. "Bill!" he shouted, before he was out of the car. "Bill! Are you all right?"

It seemed strange to me that he should want to know if I was all right but mother seemed to understand what he meant. "Jeanie was kidnapped, not Bill," mother told him.

"Oh," he said. "Oh—I thought—"

(Continued on page 234)

»»» Introducing ««« THE AUTHOR

WHEN you wonder why the author of "Return Of The Whispering Gorilla" and author's agent Julius Schwartz are shaking their fists in the cut to the right, you deserve an explanation. They are saying: "Editor, if you cut one single word or change one single comma in the Gorilla we'll beat you to a pulp!" Well, for the information of the author and the agent and to you readers, we say: "Not a word, boys, not a comma! We didn't change a thing. You can't change a story as good as this!"

Which ought to serve to introduce this introduction to author David V. Reed.

Mr. Reed, who only a few years ago got his start in the fiction field by selling his first eleven stories as fast he could write them, submitted his first science fiction story to our sister magazine, *Amazing Stories*. It was called "Where Is Roger Davis?" Today, readers are still asking where Mr. Davis is! That was a story of a Martian invasion as unusual as we've ever seen. At that time, *Amazing Stories* was awarding a special bonus to the author of the best story in each issue as determined by reader reaction. Mr. Reed, with his first story, won that award.

A short time later, on the strength of his work, he came to us as a literary editor, and for nearly a year, carried on to improve the excellence of our stories. For a time he worked with us in Chicago, a very enjoyable period, then he went back to his native Brooklyn to be in direct contact with all authors located in the east. Many of these he directed and taught in the methods of fiction writing so popular in our pages today. We all owe much to his genius.

However, Mr. Reed's greatest ambition was to write, and at last he made the decision to return to full-time writing of his own material. You have read many examples of that writing.

Not the least of these is the current story, "Return Of The Whispering Gorilla." Originally, author Don Wilcox submitted the Gorilla to Mr. Reed during his tenure as literary editor of *FANTASY ADVENTURES*. Mr. Reed instantly saw the possibilities in the character, and worked day and night for many weeks in close harmony with Mr. Wilcox in whipping the story into the shape in which it was finally published in our pages. The value of his work became evident in the flood of fan mail that followed publication of "The Whispering Gorilla."

Since then, fans have clamored for another



Julius Schwartz & David V. Reed

Gorilla story, but Don Wilcox felt that he was unsure of duplicating the "flavor" of the original story, which owed much of its atmosphere to Mr. Reed. Yet, Mr. Reed was quite anxious that the Gorilla come back, and urged Mr. Wilcox to again collaborate with him.

In a fine example of the generous nature of writers at large, and their willingness to see great fiction produced without thought of personal glory, Don Wilcox offered to lend the character to Mr. Reed in order that he write the sequel all the readers were demanding. You see the result in these pages. Congratulations, Mr. Reed, and thanks, Mr. Wilcox! Without such accord, such a fine story could not have been written.

Today Mr. Reed is still turning out fiction in his palatial home in Brooklyn, and we have on our desk a complete novel and a novelette which is truly magnificent in character. We will present these stories as soon as possible.

It is unfortunate that perhaps these will be the last for the duration, since Mr. Reed has offered his services to the United States Army Signal Corps and will very soon be bending his literary efforts to words spelled with "ack" and "emma."

Mr. Reed is married, is twenty-eight years old, and cannot work except at night. As a result, some people doubt his existence.

READER'S PAGE

OPEN LETTER TO "A SOLDIER"

Dear Sir:

Heil Hitler! Let us indeed destroy all literature that we don't like. Let us allow to be published only that which we in our narrow, bigoted minds conceive to be the proper reading for all people. Let us have no consideration for those millions of people who have different tastes, and who do not necessarily like the same things that we like. Let us set ourselves up as the sole judges of what is and what is not trash. Then, let us burn all that we do not like. In this way we can create a superior race; in this way we can conquer the world. Heil Hitler!

You should be ashamed! What are we fighting for, if not for the right to read, write, and say and do what we like? Is there not anything that you approve of that other people do not? Do they forbid your enjoyment of it? Is it verboten? Read the story of the dog in the manger.

M. M. SAUNDERS,
2103 Ong St.,
Amarillo, Tex.

P.S.—I'm not afraid to sign my name.

We present this letter as one of many received in answer to the letter written by "A Soldier."—Ed.

ANSWER TO ANOTHER LETTER

Sir:

Happened to notice a letter from Mr. Joseph Harper in the current issue which I feel deserves a reply. Naturally I can't quarrel with his opinion of the Lefty Feep stories—that's certainly not a matter for me to enter into.

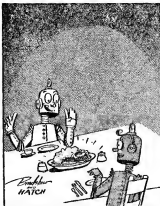
But I do note that he refers to the fact that they "smell suspiciously of Runyon, and not even a good imitation at that."

I think that comment deserves a slight correction. In a recent article on the Feep stories in a fan magazine, I took special care to point out that the style was not based on an "imitation" of Runyon. True, the stories are written in the present tense . . . but in no book of English grammar have I ever been able to find that the present tense was the personal property of Mr. Runyon or any other author. Another point of similarity lies in the use of slang phraseology . . . but if Mr. Harper is a reader of Runyon, he will find that the slang terminology employed by Feep and his friends contains almost none of the expressions used by Runyon characters, but is built upon alliterative and onomatopoeic devices of my own. I hope he won't blame Runyon for my faults!

As I analyzed the situation in my article, there is a danger in making hasty comparisons. Many fantasy authors could be wrongfully accused of writing "like" Edgar Allan Poe or H. P. Lovecraft . . . and when writing humor, many authors choose a breezy style which might lead the undiscerning reader to say that they were "copying" P. G. Wodehouse, for example, or Walter Brooks. And certainly a hundred authors today are utilizing the terse, brisk narrative form popularized by Hemingway, Hammett, James M. Cain, and John O'Hara . . . even in the "pulp."

I suggest that Mr. Harper analyze the relationship between Damon Runyon's stories and those of Ring Lardner, and H. C. Witwer, or even Mark Hellinger. As to the Feep yarns, I myself think that they owe more to the Baron Munchausen tales than the work of any other author. At least, I've heard the Baron turns over in his grave on the 20th day of each month.

Cannot close this letter without telling you how pleased I was to read SAMMY CALLS A NOOBUS by Henry Norton . . . truly one of the finest stories I've ever read in your pages. The quality of the writing and the studied development of the yarn are worthy of high praise. It's



"Oh, boy! Cogwheels smothered with axle grease!"

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was a canvas cultivator, a long-pants, or a plain jerk. Contrary to popular opinion, this is purely a fabrication of misunderstandings. (Phew!)

Now, about the mag. The cover was, as usual, excellent. All of the stories were pretty good, but I wonder if Wilcox died? How about it? About that matter pertaining to the Jones and the Mac girl. You can give me the Mac girl any day—that is, if you're foolish enough to do so. The Mac girl had a very low camber factor, while the Jones' gal is a little too much the "Mazie" type. The Mac girl has a large expect ratio, which has a lot to do with my opinion, as I like babes on the slender side. Anyway, if a boundary layer of anything, had any sense at all, it would most certainly stick to its guns while traversing her chord. I know I would, if I was said boundary layer. By the way, to that soldier who wrote condemning STF, I say: OK, mister, you don't like STF, but we do, and so we are taking every advantage of our craving. You go find what you like—and thrive in it, but if you don't understand something—especially human emotions—don't show your ignorance by condemning it.

JOHN SCHOMBURG (JR.),
 41 George Street,
 Pearl River, N. Y.

We don't exactly understand all your terms, but we bow it down to the fact you like the Mac girl, and why!—En.

COVER PUTRID

Sins:

Your cover for November—to put it mildly—was putrid. In the first place, there was no such scene in the story. Secondly, the only girl was a red-head, and thirdly—the invisible man cast only a shadow, not his entire profile.

The interior art was nice, with Finlay, of course, taking the prize. Milburn improves by leaps and bounds. Jackson's thing for the Feep tale was terrible, but his work for Cabot's short was passable. More Margarian.

THE MANCHU COFFIN was the best yarn, Finlay should have worked with this one instead of the Swain story.

LEFTY FEEP AND THE S. T. G. was much better than the last few Feep tales, but they all are lacking in the originality of the first two.

PEGASUS PLAYS PRIORITIES was a nice humorous short, and **MARLOW'S MALICIOUS MIRROR** was a poor fourth.

Paul's back cover series traverse merrily to a close, for which I am thankful. This series is the worst of Paul's wonderful works. Try to use him on the inside soon.

December is a strange month. As the year draws to a close, the editors are assailed with hundreds—maybe thousands—of letters rating the best stories of the year. Hoping that mine will get a look in, I submit the following list as the best ten. . . .

1. **THE EAGLE MAN**—Wilcox (July) The best story FA has ever presented, and second

only to the author's wonderful VOYAGE THAT LASTED 600 YEARS.

2. THE LEOPARD GIRL—Wilcox (Oct.) FA's second best. That Wilcox boy is the brightest star in your parade of authors, all right.
3. TIME WOUNDS ALL HEELS—Bloch (Apr.) I've re-read this story more than any other in my collection.
4. MADEMOISELLE BUTTERFLY—Wilcox (May) Wilcox again! Nuhed!
5. GATHER 'ROUND THE FLOWING BOWLER — Bloch (Apr.) Chuckle-chuckle-chuckle.
6. DOORWAY TO HELL—Patton (Feb-Mar.) Wonderful serial.
7. THE QUEST IN TIME—Hamilton (June)
8. LADY AND THE VAMPIRE—Costello (Feb.) Costello's best.
9. UNION IN GEHENNA—Bond (Oct.)
10. DAUGHTER OF THOR—Hamilton (Aug.)

The first eight can easily be called classics, and with a little stretching, I will include Bond's unusual and entertaining story.

The year's best cover was Smith's for May, and the best interior was Magrath's for THE LEOPARD GIRL. Finlay was great, but the Magrath pic was better.

I suppose that's about all for 1942. I am happy to say that FA far outshone its so-called "big brother." Amazing. I am looking for a great improvement in AS in '43, and the last three or four issues of FA could be improved a lot.

So long for now, and one final plea. Let's make this our motto—TRIMMED EDGES FOR '43!

GENE HUNTER,
616 E. McCarty Ave.,
Jefferson City, Mo.

We don't agree. The cover was good. And many new readers thought so too—because they bought it—and all our old readers came back with their usual faithfulness.—Ed.

TWENTY BEST STORIES

Sirs:

The December issue was a surprise climax to a none-too-prosperous year of stories. Since F.A. has been published, I have graded the stories as they appear, and have recently compiled a list of "bests." There are comparatively few considering the great number of yarns that have been published.

1. The Man From Hell, by Polton Cross.
2. The Whispering Gorilla, by Don Wilcox.
3. Strange Voyage of Hector Squinch by David Wright O'Brien.
4. Sabotage on Mars, by Maurice Dumas.
5. Fertility of Dairymple Todd, by Nelson S. Bond.
6. The Perfect Hideout, by P. F. Costello.
7. War on Venus, by Edgar Rice Burroughs.
8. The Time Merchant, by Frederic Arnold Kummer, Jr.
9. Man The World Forgot, by John York Cabot.

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10. Man Who Weighed Minus Twelve, by Nelson S. Bond.
11. Outcasts of Eternity, by Pelton Cross.
12. Man Who Saw Too Late, by Eando Binder.
13. Henry Horn's Super-Solvent, by Dwight V. Swain.
14. Hok Visits The Land of Legends, by Manly Wade Wellman.
15. Spook For Yourself, by David Wright O'Brien.
16. Doorway to Hell, by Frank Patton.
17. The Bottle Imp, by Dwight V. Swain.
18. Shayla's Garden, by Swain.
19. The Mummy of Ret-Sch, by A. Hyatt Verrill.
20. Mr. Ames' Devil, by August Derleth.

If you want reprints for *Fantastic Classics*, there they are: the best. Reprint, also, as many of the old Merritt and Lovecraft fantasies as you can, as there are many new fans who can no longer procure copies of some of these old masters' great stories, and many old fans who would like to read them over again or have them in better condition.

The December stories were rated (1) The Ghost That Haunted Hitler, (2) Marlow's Malicious Mirror, (3) The Incredible Antique, (4) Pegasus Plays Priorities, and (5) Long Remember. That's all.

My one suggestion to improve the magazine is to have less pages, smaller print, and fewer, but longer and better stories. In the art department, MacCawley, Milburn and Rod Ruth are the only good ones—and of course, Virgil Finlay, when he's in. Future outlook very promising.

R. J. GRUENBERG,
2910 N. Major Ave.,
Chicago Ill.

Many thanks for listing the twenty best stories. We think your selection is a very accurate one, and your judgment is good enough to say—come again with ratings!—Ed.

McNUTT AGAIN

Sirs:

Yes indeed, the forgotten man returns, after a long and deserved absence. Painfully I realized that FA could take care of itself while I was away. Ahh me!

But . . . but, I must come out from my hole this time to compliment you on the fine October issue you presented us. Yes, it was really super: stories, features, and drawings.

I vote the cover the best St. John I have ever had the pleasure to see. One can tell he took time on it and really tried to produce. That's the way I like to see St. John paint. (It is ever so reminiscent of the days of yore when John Carter was in his full glory.)

The back cover was however in the reverse. It is the worst Paul has ever done. (Notice the smeared background.) Whazza matter with youse guys? Either you read only FA and AS or are plain unobservant, because it is a well known fact that Paul cannot draw the human figure and specializes in machinery ONLY! All the four Pauls were lousy, and it hurts to see such a fine artist

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THE FUGITIVE

(Continued from page 226)

but no matter. He took one look at Jeanie's mother. "You go lie down," he said.

Mr. Butler had been trying to get Jeanie's mother to lie down but he hadn't been able to get her to do it. Father wouldn't take no for an answer. He took Mrs. Butler home.

A few minutes later we heard Mrs. Butler screaming.

We ran to see what had happened. We found her in her house. She was in a room on the second floor. Father, a dazed look on his face, was standing beside her. She was kneeling beside a bed.

Jeanie was lying on the bed. Mrs. Butler was hugging her and crying and laughing at the same time.

"She wasn't kidnapped at all," Mrs. Butler was saying. "She just came up here and went to sleep. We've been looking for her everywhere and all the time she was right here."

Mrs. Butler was almost hysterical with relief. Everybody cheered. Jeanie was safe. That was all that mattered.

Then the cheering and the congratulations slowly died into silence. For some reason everybody started looking at me. I didn't know why they were looking at me. I soon found out.

"What do you mean by telling that

ridiculous story and scaring us all half to death?" Mrs. Butler demanded, looking at me. "Why did you do that, Bill? Don't you have any consideration for anyone else? Don't you ever think of anyone else, you—you—"

Mrs. Butler thought I had been lying when I had told them that two men had grabbed Jeanie. She thought Jeanie had been here asleep all the time!

IT WAS the first time anybody had ever called me a liar. I felt all mixed up and confused and I didn't know what to do. How could I convince these people that I was telling the truth?

"I'm not a liar," I said. "Two men did grab Jeanie and run off with her. I saw them do it."

I saw by their faces that they didn't believe me. Mr. Butler was looking at me as if he wanted to tan my hide for all the trouble I had caused him.

"Hrrumph!" my father said, clearing his throat. "Before we call Bill a liar, why don't we ask Jeanie what happened?"

Because most of the people had already decided I had invented a fanciful story, his suggestion did not meet with much approval. But nobody was going to call me a liar in father's presence.

"What happened, Jeanie?" he asked.

At first she was scared because of all the people in her room. She thought she might have done something wrong and she didn't want to talk.

"Tell 'em what happened, Jeanie," I told her. "They think I'm a liar. You tell 'em."

Jeanie sat up in bed. "Two men grabbed me. They took me far away. They said they were going to keep me forever."

Silence fell. People looked at me and at Jeanie and at each other and didn't say anything. Mrs. Butler swallowed.

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"I'm sorry, Bill," she whispered. "I'm sorry I called you a liar." Mr. Butler blew his nose and didn't say anything.

"What I want to know," the sheriff said heavily, "If that story Bill told is the truth—" He didn't finish. What he left unsaid was more important than what he said.

"That's what I'm thinking," my father said. He turned to Jeanie. Everything got still. Everybody seemed to be holding his breath.

"Did the two men bring you back?" father asked.

"No," Jeanie said. "Mr. Larkin brought me back."

"Mr. Larkin!" Father caught himself. There were things Jeanie would understand and things she would not.

"Back from where?" father asked gently. "Back from where?"

From the tone of his voice, I knew he thought it an important question.

"I don't know," Jeanie said slowly.

"They took me to a big place. There were a lot of machines—"

"How did Mr. Larkin bring you back?" father asked.

"He just—brought me back!" Jeanie answered. "We were there in the big place with the two men and the machines. Mr. Larkin came and he talked to the two men. Mr. Larkin took my hand. Then we were here. He put me to bed and told me to go to sleep."

"Was that all?" father said. From the way he spoke I didn't know whether he really wanted to hear more or whether he had already heard too much.

"Except that he kissed me good-night," Jeanie said. "And he told me if I was brave and didn't cry, maybe someday he would come back and bring me another doll. I haven't cried, mama, have I?"

She quickly wiped the traces of tears out of her eyes.

"Get out of here," my father said, his

(Continued on page 240)

CORRESPONDENCE CORNER

Robert E. Roach, 1252 W. 80th St., Chicago, Ill., has many magazine copies featuring most of A Merritt's stories for sale at reasonable prices. . . . Robert Kalanja, 421 Duquesne Ave., Trafford, Pa., has coins, stamps, books, fossils, chemicals and scientific equipment, Indian relics and magazines to trade for books, fiction or science. He would also like to correspond with boys and girls between the ages of 17 and 20. . . . Anyone interested in psychic research write to Charles Miller, 202 E. 115 Street, New York City, or to Bill Caple, 412 N. School St., Calif., and he will receive a copy of "Psychical Research" free. Just enclose a three cent stamp for mailing. Paper contains articles on Spiritualism, Telepathy, Clairvoyance, Etc. . . . Roger Hendricks, State Hospital, Morganton, N. C., would like to hear from readers having back numbers of S-F mags to dispose of and the stories and poems of Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith, and the poems of Christ Hastings and Edgar Daniel Kramer. . . . Elizabeth King, 722 Forest, Ann Arbor, Mich., would like to write to anyone remotely resembling her idol, Maxie Baer, and who is interested in prize fighting. . . . Renée Dunsell, 763 Crown St., Brooklyn, N. Y., 17 years old, would like to correspond with young men. She enjoys sports, dancing, and reading. . . . Philip Sturm, Jr., 714 W. Dickens Ave., Chicago, Ill., has AMAZING and FANTASTIC stories from several years back that he would like to sell. He also has other science-fiction magazines. . . . Tom Arnold, 1700 Hickory St., Texarkana, Ark., would like to play corresponding chess with any one interested. He would also like to sell a silent home movie machine, films, an almost new photography set worth \$10.00, and a complete set of Jerry Todd Books. . . . Lucille Kraft, age 15, R.F.D. 5, Allegan, Michigan, would like to correspond with boys and girls her age or older. . . . Eddy Morille, Gervasio 10F, Havana, Cuba, Cuban, age 17, wants young pen pals anywhere, interested in everything. Write in Spanish, English, French, Portuguese or Roperanto. Immediate answers. . . . Mary Senchisen, 33 St. Michaels Ave., Stratford, Conn., would like to correspond with men in service. She is 23 years old. . . . Corp. Eli A. Homza, Company "G," Fifteenth Signal Service Regiment, Fort Monmouth, N. J., wants girl pen pals for correspondence. . . . Joe Vallin, 5809 33rd St., Washington, D. C., has the following books for sale: "At the Earth's Core," "Tarzan Lord of the Jungle," "Pirates of Venus," "Land of Hidden Men," and "The Triumph of Tarzan." . . . Shirley Beckers, Route No. 2, Allegan, Mich., would like to correspond with anyone from 16 to 22, especially anyone in the armed service. . . . Ann Mailsek, 236 Beach St., Bridgeport, Conn., 16 years old, would like young men in the service to write to her. . . . George C. Bump, 4116 Terrace St., Oakland, Calif., wants pen pals.

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ICARUS AND DAEDALUS FIRST AVIATORS

By MORRIS J. STEELE

This legend grew to personality man's ancient and earnest desire to fly like a bird. (See painting on back cover.)

PERHAPS the earliest inventor of either recorded or legendary history was the Greek architect and sculptor, Daedalus. His accomplishments were many, and perhaps most famed was the labyrinth of Minos, king of Crete, built as a method of torture and trial for those who incurred Minos' displeasure. Other of his accomplishments were the sculpture of a wooden cow for Pasiphaë, and a bronze man who repelled the Argonauts.

However, Daedalus probably got credit for doing a lot of things he didn't actually do. The Greeks were in the habit of saying "Daedalus made it" whenever they saw something the origin of which was shrouded in mystery or lost in the past. Thus many Greek cities had wooden statues said to be by him. Later he was credited with such improvements as separating the legs of statues and opening their eyes. In the *Iliad*, he is mentioned as the maker of a dancing-place in Crete. Probably the first dance hall and night club owner in history. All in all, he had many accomplishments.

But the accomplishment which was to preserve his name, and that of his son, to modern times was the feat of flying, of making the dream of Man from time immemorial come true.

During his stay in Crete, Daedalus got into a bit of a jam with Minos, and in spite of Minos' pleasure over the very clever labyrinth, the king became displeased with Daedalus (history doesn't say why, and possibly it might have been because of his night club business) and thought very seriously of losing him in his own creation, the labyrinth.

Obviously Daedalus regarded his own invention as highly as Minos did, and feared that being placed in it might prove to be problem even the inventor of the problem couldn't solve—at least in time to keep from starving to death or going mad in blind alleys. So he escaped from Crete. His method of escape was daring, original, and highly sensational, and proved to be much more dangerous than the labyrinth might have been. He and his son became the first aviators and flew from Crete to Sicily.

Perhaps the most amazing thing about this flight was not the means, but the distance. Considering the means, the distance is terrific! Crete is four hundred miles from Sicily.

Learning that his life, and that of his son, was in danger, Daedalus cast about him for a means

of escape from Crete. Minos' navy had him trapped, and swimming was 'out of the question. So he thought with a great deal of wishful thinking that it would be nice if he could fly away from Crete.

The thought set his inventive mind to work, and he began rummaging around for materials to make the only thing his mind could conceive of as instrumental in enabling him and his son to fly: wings. He found quantities of wax, and feathers was an easy question to answer—there were an abundance of fowl on Crete.

Together they set to work, and after certain labor (legend doesn't reveal how long it took to make the wings) they were the proud possessors of two pair of wings. These wings possessed leather straps which made it possible to attach them to shoulders and arms.

Motive power was to be furnished by the arms, and the motions were similar to those of the bird, a rapid flapping.

Repairing to the seaside cliffs of Crete, the two donned their wings and bravely (or suicidally) leaped into space. However, Daedalus lived up to his reputation as a capable inventor, and the wings bore them aloft in magnificent style.

Delighted, the two soared on over the sea toward distant Sicily. As they went on, with ease and swiftness, Icarus grew exuberant. He began to stunt, and later began an ascent toward a new altitude record. Although there is no actual indication of how high he went, something happened that resulted in disaster—his wings melted and collapsed, and he plunged down to his death in the sea.

Legend says he came too near to the sun, and the heat of the sun's rays melted the wax of his wings. Today we know this was a rather illogical explanation, and it is more reasonable to believe that his altitude, rather than being high, was low enough so that the sun's heat was as great as it naturally would be at several hundred feet, and did aid in melting the wax, assisted by the heat of his body.

Daedalus, horrified, circled for some time, but could not save his son, so continued on to Sicily. Perhaps it was the tragedy that caused him to abandon further attempts at flying, but he destroyed his pair of wings and made no more.

However, according to legend, aviation is no modern invention at all.

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THE FUGITIVE

(Continued from page 236)

voice hoarse and frightened. "All of you, get out of here."

Because he was the doctor, we did what he told us.

I KNOW there are still people in town who think they were hoaxed by a couple of children. "Kids wanted some excitement," they say. "One of them pretended she was kidnapped and the other one said he saw it happen. Kids are like that."

If people want to think that, I don't care. I am old enough now to know that the impossible happens around us daily, and nobody ever believes it. I can't help what people believe. I know what I know.

I don't know who Mr. Larkin was. I don't know where he came from, I don't know what he was doing in our town. I only know what I think.

I think Mr. Larkin was a time traveller. I think, by the use of some kind of mental power, he could pass through time. I think he came from the future. I think he came here to hide, that he

was a fugitive hiding in time.

I don't know why he was hiding. I can't guess at motives. I don't know—there are so many things I don't know. But I think Mr. Larkin was a time traveller and I think the men who were after him could also travel through time.

I have two good reasons for thinking as I do. One of the reasons is a fifty dollar bill, which Mr. Larkin gave to my father. Dad never attempted to pass the bill. He kept it as a curiosity, a memo of a strange experience. He thought it was counterfeit, because it was dated in 1943 but Mr. Larkin gave it to him in 1933.

Mr. Larkin came to our town in 1931, he lived here two years, and after being wounded and after Jeanie was kidnapped, he disappeared in 1933.

Under those circumstances, how could he pay a bill with money that was dated in 1943?

The second reason for thinking Mr. Larkin was a time traveller? You remember the sheriff took his fingerprints? I learned later that the sheriff had checked those prints with the files of the FBI in Washington and the FBI had no record of them. In other words,

Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1935, and March 1, 1938, of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, published weekly at Chicago, Ill., for October 1, 1942. State of Illinois, County of Cook, ss. Before me, a notary public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared A. T. Patten, who, having been duly sworn according to law, depose and say that he is the business manager of the FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1935, as amended by the Act of March 1, 1938, embodied in sections 937, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to-wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business manager are: Publisher, W. B. 328, 545 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.; Editor, R. G. Davis, 545 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.; Managing Editor, R. A. Palmer, 545 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.; Business Manager, A. T. Patten, 545 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 2. That the owner is: If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding one per cent or more of total amount of stock; if not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual persons must be stated; if owned by a firm, company or other unincorporated concern, its name and address, as well as those of each individual owner, must be given; 3. That the names and addresses of the owners, stockholders, etc., are: W. B. 328, 545 N. Michigan, Chicago, Ill.; W. B. 328, 545 N. Michigan, Chicago, Ill.; R. G. Davis, 545 N. Michigan, Chicago, Ill.; R. A. Palmer, 545 N. Michigan, Chicago, Ill.; A. T. Patten, 545 N. Michigan, Chicago, Ill. 4. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state.) None. 5. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders, and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholders or security holders appear upon the books of the company in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. 6. That the average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the twelve months preceding the date shown above is (This information is required from daily publications only.) A. T. Patten. (Signature of business manager.) Sworn to and subscribed before me this 25th day of September, 1942. (Rec'd.) Lois Rea, Notary Public. (My commission expires January 28, 1945.)

in 1933 Mr. Larkin was not known to the FBI.

In 1943 he was known to the FBI. In 1943 our local hank was burglarized by some super-cracksman who opened the vault at night and helped himself to the money. The burglar left fingerprints inside the vault. The sheriff, checking those prints with the FBI, discovered they were identical with Mr. Larkin's prints, taken ten years before. Part of the loot taken from the hank was a package of brand-new fifty dollar bills, dated in 1943.

If Mr. Larkin could not pass through time, how could he have been spending in 1933 money that was not printed until 1943?

The answer is, he couldn't.

The answer is, he was a time traveler.

The answer is, the man you meet on the street, the man who lives next door, any man, may, like Mr. Larkin, be a fugitive hiding in time.

CLUB OF THE DAMNED (Concluded from page 215)

didn't run far, lad. His machine wrapped around a steel light pole half a block down as he was getting away. They're down there now picking the pieces of what's left o' him from the wreckage."

Devlin felt sick to his stomach.

"He—he's dead?" he managed.

"Cut up into a dozen pieces, he is," said the policeman. "If he ain't dead, nobody's ever been."

Devlin rose on wobbly legs. The policeman put a big hand under his arm to steady him.

"I'm just after checking the license identification tags we got outta the wreck," the policeman said conversationally. "We think the guy's name was Benson."

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ICARUS AND DAEDALUS, FIRST AVIATORS

Aviation had its beginning with these two. They constructed wings of wax and feathers and succeeded in flying. Icarus came too near the sun and died when his wings melted, plunging him back to earth. (Complete story)